

MARCH 1954

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# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL



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# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

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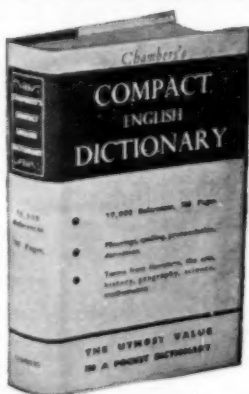
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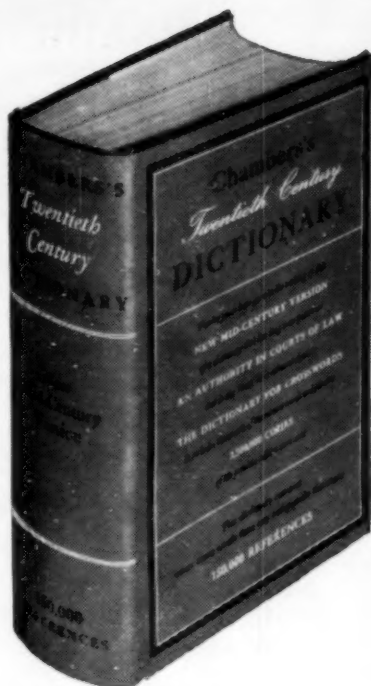
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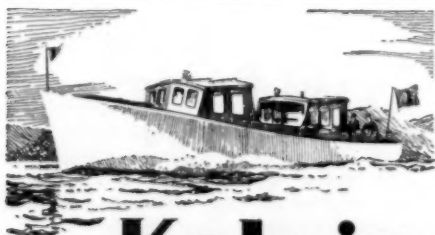
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I took a timetable out of my suitcase and began reading quietly in the manner prescribed, the names of about one hundred railway stations. I observed that, after reading them over a few times, I could recite the whole list off with hardly a mistake. With a little more practice I found I had committed them so completely to memory that I could remember them in the reverse order and even pick out one station from the list and say which number it was, and what were the names of the towns before and after it.

I was astonished at the memory I had acquired and spent the rest of my journey on more and more difficult experiments in memory, and reflecting how this new control I was achieving over my mind would materially help me to a greater success in life. After this, I worked hard at this wonderful memory system, and within a week I found I could recall passages from books and quote them with ease; names, addresses and business appointments were remembered immediately; and in four months I had succeeded in learning Spanish.

If I have obtained from life a measure of wealth and happiness, it is to that book I owe it, for it revealed to me the workings of my brain.

Three years ago, I had the good fortune to meet its author, and I promised him to propagate his method, and to-day I am glad of this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to him.

I can only suppose that others wish to acquire what is, after all, the most valuable asset towards success in life.

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## Death of a Motive

ANDREW PATON

**I**N the centre of the great flat plain the wind met little opposition and its full force struck the camp like a slap on the face.

The camp had suffered many slaps. The long wooden huts gave the impression that they were trying to cower a little closer to the earth. Even the towers from which the disillusioned eyes of guards looked out seemed unwilling to hold themselves any higher than necessary.

The plain stood in the centre of Europe, the camp stood in the centre of the plain, and Piotr Kamenev stood in the centre of the camp. He was not, however, aware of the central nature of his position. He just pushed the pump-handle up and down and looked around him with the dull, observant eyes of a peasant.

He had one glove, and this was on his right hand, the one that grasped the iron handle of the pump. His left hand was plunged in the depth of the pocket of his coarse long overcoat. His body was bent and drawn in as if seeking refuge within its own skin from the vicious probing of the east wind.

And yet he was as little aware of the cold as he was of pushing the pump-handle up and

down. He was only aware of the gradually-awakening life of the camp. He liked nothing better than to stand here and watch the people of half the countries of the world go circling round and round him.

The heart of the camp consisted of this big hollow square, with huts on three sides of it and a double row of wire on the fourth. Right in the middle of the square stood the building which was Piotr's principal place of business. The French called it the Throne Room, the English referred to it variously as the Albert Hall, the Club, and the Adolf Hitler Platz, the Americans gave it luridly functional and accurately descriptive names. The German guards were content to call it the Abort. Never anything else. Always the Abort.

A flight of seven steps led up to it, and inside were four rows of twelve seats. Each seat had a lid, and on the walls in fourteen languages was printed the command: 'Shut the lid after use.'

Every morning Piotr operated the pump, while Gania unyoked the two oxen from the barrel-like cart and led them off to haul the coal-wagon. This was the moment when

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Piotr's day really began. He could feel the life of all the peoples of the world flowing round him here in surging currents. Not only did everybody come to visit the Abort, but, more important, everybody also used the square as a recreation area and a promenade.

Sometimes there would be football matches, and sometimes athletic meetings. These were the highlights. But every day after morning roll-call a number of people would start walking round the square, and soon they would be joined by more, and these by more until at last it was like a march-past of the races and peoples of the earth.

Piotr had studied them so long that he could tell the nationality of many of them not only by their uniforms but also by the way they went round the square. The English, their cheeks glowing and their breath coming fast, would go marching along intent on the exercise, and you could almost hear them counting the number of circuits they had made. The French would amble slowly along talking seriously and perhaps even stopping now and then to settle some point thoroughly. The Dutch, with the long, golden, rather effeminate chevrons on their sleeves, would go along heavily, usually in the company of someone of a different nationality, learning his language.

As the months had gone by, more and more nationalities had arrived and the population of the camp had risen quite rapidly from fifteen thousand to twenty thousand. Recently they had brought in Finns and Bulgarians, Rumanians and Danes. These now mixed with Americans and British, Yugoslavs, South Africans, Norwegians, Indians, Australians, Canadians, and Russians.

It was when he caught sight of an occasional Russian that Piotr's pleasure was spoiled, for the Russian would not be marching round for exercise like the British, or for discussion like the French, or to learn languages like the Dutch. He would be slinking from hut to hut or from person to person begging scraps of food or cigarette-ends. He would be looking over his shoulder all the time, knowing that the minute a guard saw him he would be marched back to his own separate compound, which he was not supposed to have left in the first place.

The Russians were right at the bottom of this strange society. They were the beggars and the scavengers. Their clothes were in rags and they had no decent boots. They had

come in without wrist-watches and existed without Red Cross parcels. They received less food than the others, and perhaps it was only natural that they should beg. But every time he saw it Piotr felt ashamed. After all, they were Russians. They belonged to one of the great nations of the world. He himself performed a menial task, but it raised him high above this begging level. He felt angry and puzzled, especially when he saw open, whining beggars like Lef Burdovsky, and wanted to lecture them in a somewhat self-righteous manner. But how could he? They would simply have turned and asked him about the little arrangements he had with the guards who accompanied him in and out of the main gate with the cart every day. That would shut him up all right.

**T**O-DAY there were not quite as many as usual in the afternoon promenade. The chill wind was keeping many indoors. Only the English seemed to be out in full strength, their cheeks redder than ever and their walking pace as fast as other people would run.

Piotr was pushing the handle up and down without thinking, without exerting himself, just letting the faces of this league of nations revolve around him like the figures of a gigantic roundabout.

At four o'clock, just as he was thinking it was about time for Gania to come back with the oxen, he became aware of a distant sound of singing. At first he continued to push the handle of the pump, but when he realised that the singing was outside the camp and was getting nearer he stopped. Everybody was looking across the empty compound at the open end of the square to the road beyond. It was a rough little dirt-road which led across the plain and gave the impression that it just died out somewhere beyond the horizon. It did not die out, however, but led to a railway-siding at which all the new prisoners arrived. It was the road, they kept assuring themselves, which some day would lead to freedom.

A new group of prisoners was coming along it now. Piotr had watched many new prisoners arriving, but this was the first lot that had arrived singing. Why should they be singing? What was there to sing about in coming into a prison camp? He moved over towards the wire in order to see them better. Every other man in the square was doing the same, and

## DEATH OF A MOTIVE

more were coming out of their huts as the news spread.

The singing got louder and the figures came nearer and at a certain point there was suddenly a complete silence in the camp square. This was the moment when the voices suddenly became identifiable as women's voices and the blue-uniformed figures as women's figures. The silence lasted perhaps five seconds and then was broken by a babel of speculation in twenty different tongues.

A Cockney sergeant who hadn't seen a woman since Christmas Day 1939 beat the others by a second or two. 'Blimey,' he said, 'it's a battalion o' bints!' Other men simply whispered the word 'Women!' in their own language. Some took their caps off and started waving and cheering. Some plunged into discussions as to who they were and what they were coming here for. An elderly French private sighed and said: 'Ah well, it could not last for ever.'

The song grew louder and the word went round that it was Polish. The women drew nearer and soon individual faces could be seen and they became real people. They held their heads a little higher as they approached the camp, and they sang a little louder. The song they sang had a military sort of tune and the German guards could not help marching in step to it.

The women came in through the main gate of the camp all dressed in dark-blue uniforms, some in slacks, some in skirts, all singing, all looking proud. They marched through the smaller gate into the empty compound beyond the double fence and stood in fives while they were counted. When this had been done three times a receipt was signed and handed to the guard which had brought the prisoners in. The twenty members of this guard went trailing off with their hosts to have a meal and the women were left for a time to their own devices.

They came running over at once to the fence and started talking across no-man's-land to twenty thousand men. At first they spoke in Polish, and the handful of Poles among the men pressed through to the front and eagerly questioned them. But soon a Frenchman found one who could speak French and several Englishmen found others who could speak English, and a Scotsman found a young girl who could speak Spanish, which he himself had learned in a Glasgow school, and a Danish policeman who had been brought in

for taking part in a strike found himself talking in Esperanto to a middle-aged Polish teacher. The rest managed to talk in the basic German which was the international language of the camp.

The story was told in a dozen languages and with a moral indignation whose force could be felt like a current of electricity across the wires.

The women had taken part in the great Warsaw uprising which was to leave the way clear for the Russians to occupy the city. But the Red Army had halted at the very gates of Warsaw and let the Germans smash the rebellion with ruthless determination.

Piotr heard the voices and saw the animated faces but had no idea what the women were talking about. He was aware only of an exciting new element in the life of the camp.

And then something else happened. An American sergeant threw a bar of chocolate across the two fences to a tall, dark girl to whom he had been talking. And an English soldier threw a packet of cigarettes to another girl. A number of men went running to their huts and came hurrying back to throw tins of bully-beef and dried milk and sardines and packets of biscuits and more chocolate and more cigarettes, until the Polish women could scarcely keep pace with the shower of gifts that was pouring down on them.

Piotr stood and gazed in silence at a sight that he had never dreamed he would see. His mouth was slightly open and his arms were hanging heavily by his sides. He was not conscious of what thoughts were going through his head. He was absorbing impressions as a sponge absorbs water.

He was aroused from this almost trance-like state by a tap on the shoulder from Gania Zalesheff, and a reminder that it was high time they were driving the cart over to the main gate. Gania had been watching the events at the fence, too, but neither said a word about them. They uncoupled the pipe and attached it to the side of the cart, replaced the iron cover on the manhole, sat up together on the narrow seat, and drove toward the gate. A guard came up beside them to accompany them to the fields where the load was to be spread, but Piotr was scarcely aware of his presence.

WHEN Piotr had returned to his hut later and had drawn his soup and eaten it,



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he was told that Viazovkin had called a meeting in Hut Three to begin at twenty hours. Viazovkin was an official Party man and it was generally agreed that he had been sent deliberately to the camp by the Party to see that no deviations from official policy were voiced.

Viazovkin posted spies at the doors of the long, ill-lit hut, with its close-set rows of three-tier bunks. He then proceeded to tell them that the Polish women were a bunch of bourgeois nationalist tools who had been used by the big capitalists to try to seize power in Warsaw before the arrival of the Red Army. They had failed because they had not had the support of the masses, and no sympathy must be wasted on them. They were spreading false stories about the Red Army, and anybody who believed them was a traitor and an enemy of the people.

When it was all over, Piotr knew scarcely a word of what had been said. He had been thinking his own thoughts all the time and had found himself overcome more and more with a sense of shame that it was his country alone among all those gathered in this camp that had failed even to blow a kiss of encouragement to those brave, singing women. Right in the middle of Viazovkin's speech he had made up his mind to do something to remedy this.

NEXT morning Piotr went out with Gania and the guard as usual to collect the cart and the two skinny oxen. The guard-to-day was Private Holzmann, with whom Gania had an understanding about the smuggling of bread. The parcel, wrapped up in sacking, was hidden below the seat, and they drove away from the farmyard and made for the camp gate. Private Holzmann was in good form this morning. He dug Gania in the ribs and chuckled. 'You'll be able to buy yourself a woman with that lot!' he said. Gania smiled. He wasn't the one to say much. Piotr could feel his face getting red at the shame of it, but he said nothing.

During the morning they were working at Number Three Abort and therefore saw nothing of the Polish women. While he worked, Piotr gave a great deal of thought to the question of what he could present to the women. He had access to bread, but bread was not the sort of thing he wanted to give. The bread must be exchanged for something finer.

If only Mikhail Skripnik were here instead of being tied down by his one leg to a miserable village halfway to Siberia he would be able to make a bracelet fit for a queen out of scraps of aluminium from old mess-tins. But Mikhail was a craftsman. Himself, he could not even sew a button on to his coat.

When they had driven out of the camp at midday he had a quiet word with Private Holzmann while Gania was making arrangements with a man in a small farm about bread. Private Holzmann agreed to do what he could, but had no definite ideas to offer.

In the afternoon they drove to Number One Abort and discovered that a great change had come over the scene. The Polish women were still there in their compound ten metres away, the masses of men prisoners were still here looking across at them. But between the two groups were not only the two walls of wire and the forbidden zone of ten metres but also three guards with fixed bayonets, and a long notice in German which, Gania told him, said that no man must halt at this section, no man must throw anything across the fence, and that any man disobeying these instructions would face serious consequences.

As they coupled up the pipe and started the slow, rhythmical motion of operating the pump, Piotr watched the crowd to see if the notice was being obeyed. For a time it appeared that it was, and everybody kept walking round and round, and when they came to the section opposite to the women's compound they would wave and smile. But suddenly a whole group of men waved at the same time and a tin of corned beef came soaring out of their midst and went flying across the gap and landed right in front of a group of Polish women. One of them picked it up and they all laughed and blew kisses across the wire. The men continued to walk sedately round their compound.

This happened at frequent intervals, and Piotr had to admire the skilful way it was done. The guards, on the other hand, were being driven frantic by the sheer impossibility of catching the guilty ones. Some of the men felt sorry for the guards, for they were mostly old chaps and not really soldiers but members of the Home Guard, though all the same you couldn't help laughing at their helpless panic.

Every now and then a little serious-faced girl with straight, black hair like an Eskimo's would come out of a hut and watch all this.

## DEATH OF A MOTIVE

But she never bothered to pick up anything, and she never smiled. Piotr decided, he did not know why, that he would throw his gift right at her feet.

LATER, when Piotr and Gania had packed up and driven to the main gate, Private Holzmann joined them. 'Well,' he said to Gania, 'got a woman yet?' But Gania only smiled.

Piotr was afraid the guard would mention the other matter in front of Gania, but Holzmann had the sense to wait until Gania was out of the way and they were alone. 'How will this do?' he said, producing a small box from the pocket of his greatcoat. It was a very beautiful box, thought Piotr, but what was in it? Private Holzmann opened the box very gently and showed him. 'Face-powder,' he said. 'Almost impossible to get in Germany to-day. Smell it.'

Piotr sniffed delicately at the fine powder and his mind could scarcely cope with the new sensation. 'Yes,' he said, 'it is good. I want it.'

'Have you got the coffee?' asked the guard warily.

Piotr reached deep into the pocket that had no hole and produced a tin of American coffee, which he exchanged quickly for the powder. They both tried to look busy as Gania came back.

EVERY evening there was a further promenade, and this was less for exercise than for sociability. Even the Englishmen walked slowly during the evening promenade. Piotr had never taken part in it, for at that time he was locked in his own compound. But he had planned to take part in it to-night. This was not really difficult. Everybody knew the way. Round the back of Hut Eight, underneath the loose wire into the hospital compound, over a wooden fence into the main street of the camp, and then a straightforward walk to the square.

He followed this route, the box of powder wrapped up in thick paper in his pocket. In the square he let himself be carried along by the current of humanity and found himself enjoying the sensation. The lights were bright above this river of men, and every now and then the beam of the searchlight would sweep across like an unexpected gleam of sun

behind a cloud. The voices of the nations chattered and argued and laughed around him. He felt at one with all these men, and yet he felt apart. Sometimes one of them would say to him something that sounded like 'Hallojo.' He did not know what it meant but it sounded friendly. Maybe it also sounded a little bit as if they pitied him. But there was no need for pity. No need at all.

When he passed the women's compound he found that a rope had been stretched across well in front of the barbed-wire and that it was forbidden to cross the rope. The second time he came round he carefully measured the distance with his eye and tried to make up his mind whether or not he could throw his gift right across the rope and the two wire fences. It was very difficult to decide. The third time round he tried again to judge the distance but could not. The fourth time round he saw the serious little one with the Eskimo hair standing alone not far from the wire.

What if he did not throw it? It would not be possible at all in daylight. He had no friends to cause a diversion while he threw it. He must do it to-night or not at all.

When he came round for the fifth time the searchlight was playing about the area of the rope, so he walked quietly on and did another two or three circuits. And then suddenly he put his left foot forward, drew his arm back and put all the energy of his body and soul into throwing the parcel high over the wire toward the solitary figure beyond. It soared over the rope and over the first wire, but then it seemed suddenly to lose all its force and came flopping hopelessly down in the desert of cinders between the two compounds.

For a moment he stood still and a couple of Frenchmen bumped into him from the back. They apologised and went round him, one on each side. He stood stupidly for a second or two longer staring at the little grey packet lying in no-man's-land. Then somebody else bumped into him and he had to start walking again.

At least nobody had seen him throw the box, and nobody seemed to have noticed it lying there. That was something to be thankful for, and as he walked round he devoted himself to thinking out what his next move should be.

By the time the whistle had blown to indicate that lights out would be in fifteen minutes he had made up his mind. The even flow of humanity was disturbed as

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groups broke off and made for their huts. Some waved and called good-night to the women. The women waved back and turned toward their huts. Piotr made for the Abort, opened the little door under the stairs and crawled quietly in.

THERE had been an air-raid alert every night for the last three or four months. Surely it would not fail him to-night. An alert here did not mean any screaming of sirens. It simply meant that the lights went out. All except the searchlight. Surely he could avoid that.

The stench did not worry him, nor did the possibility of being found in this compound at roll-call. But the chance that there might be no alert to-night kept nagging at his mind until he had convinced himself that he was wasting his time.

He had no watch, but he knew that three or four hours had passed. The lights were still blazing out there and the searchlight was moving uneasily backward and forward like a tiger in a cage. You would have thought it too wanted to get out beyond the wire.

As a rule there were two alarms. One when the planes were going east, and one when they were returning westward. It was too late now for them to go eastward. He could only hope that, having reached their target by a different route, they would come back this way.

Another hour or two went by and his hopes had almost completely faded when, in a strangely silent way, without even a click, the lights went out.

He pushed the small door wide-open and crawled stiffly out. The searchlight was still probing silently and restlessly. He had hoped to hear the sound of planes, for, when they came as near as that, even the searchlight went out. But there was no sound at all. He left his wooden shoes beside the door and, bending low, ran on bare feet across the cinders toward the fence.

He reached the wire and started to climb. It was not a boundary fence, so it was straightforward, without one of those elaborate tops. The space between the barbs was just wide enough for the middle of his foot. He climbed quickly to the top, put his right foot over and

twisted it round to place it between two barbs, and was just bringing his left foot over to join it when the vicious beam of light from the main tower came swinging round and caught him fair and square in the eyes, blinding him.

He jumped before he had brought his left foot across, caught the coarse cloth of his trousers on the wire, and fell headlong down to the ground.

He made a rush for the parcel, but the white beam had followed him down. There was a single, economical crack from the tower and he went plunging forward as if he were making a tackle in some floodlit game of football. He started to crawl toward the parcel, but suddenly stopped. His fingers were almost touching it.

WHEN the men came out for morning roll-call he was still lying in the same position. An American corporal saw him. 'Hey, O'Dwyer,' he called out. 'There's a guy that was even more desperate than you for a woman.'

'Wrong again,' said O'Dwyer, who was a man of few words. 'That guy was after chow. Pipe the package. Cheese, ain't it?'

'Well, well, well,' said the corporal. 'Only goes to show . . .'

A number of others glanced at the body, slightly curious. Russians were always getting shot while they were slipping from one compound to another. 'But what a bold conception!' said a French anti-tank gunner. 'Now, my plan would be quite different . . .'

The women did not wave and smile to-day. They stood in little serious groups and drifted in and out of the huts. The only time this quiet atmosphere was disturbed was when Piotr's body was being carried away on a stretcher. The little dark one whose brother had been killed in the Warsaw fighting suddenly spat on the ground and shouted some remarks about the Russians.

Later in the day Gania Zalesheff, with a new partner, drove the cart to the main gate. Private Holzmänn came out of the guard-room and walked over to the cart. He paused before climbing up on to the narrow seat, and he and Gania exchanged a glance. It was Piotr's only epitaph.

April First Story: *The Honest Fisherman* by Maurice Walsh.

# Australian Firebugging

H. L. BEALE

'INFERIOR LAND' was how the agent had truthfully advertised the sandy, rocky slice off the map of the south coast of New South Wales that we three brothers, Joe, Andy, and myself, had leased from the Government. Ours was a half-serious enterprise—partly an experiment in pig-raising, partly cattle-raising to pay for the whole thing. We had discovered that the soil would grow really well one kind of grass—*Paspalum dilatatum*, if I remember rightly, was its name. But, how to clear somewhere for the stuff to grow? Scrub, scrub, scrub, bush, forest, undergrowth, overgrowth, bracken, sword-grass . . .

'Thank God,' said Andy, as we dismounted after our umpteenth depressing survey on horseback, 'there is at least one good thing about the place.' He pointed to the house. He was right there. It was a pretty thing to look at, nicely proportioned, and so posed beside the lake that its white reflection cheered up the gloom of the trees, apparently drowning upside down in the water.

We went down to supper, and, not long after it, I crawled into my bed on the verandah. Soft summer luxury! I can feel it all now. Only one sheet around the body, just enough in the warm night. The starlit lake; the dim outline of the forest-covered hills; the frogs' choir; the rhythmic beat of the water-ram in the creek, and, in the distance, the faint murmur of the surf. I fell asleep.

It couldn't have been long after that I was awakened by a shouting. I recognised the voice. It belonged to Christian, our jackaroo, until recently a sailor in the Danish merchant marine. I shuffled, yawning, into the house. Yes, it was Christian all right. There he was, sitting with my two brothers, obviously in conference. They had a map spread out before them. The kerosene-lamp on the table threw a cone of light into which the face and arms of a man would appear for a moment while

he pointed out something with his pipe-stem or his oversize finger, and then disappear into the shadow as though he had swum out of a sunlit pool. Strong, intent faces they were—those of my brothers, long, brown, and sun-parched from hot southern land; Christian's round, taut, and still rosy-bluish from the cold of northern seas.

They did not tell me what it was all about. They did not need to. I thought that I knew why Christian had been shouting. Once again it was Joe insisting that it was quite safe to burn off the scrub, and Andy taking evasive action. How many times had our eldest brother repeated that we had the two essential obstacles to fire—namely, space and water? Now he was saying it again. 'There is the Pacific Ocean on two sides of us, and the two lakes on another side, with Sussex Inlet on the fourth.' Yet none of us had ever been able to get out of our minds the awful consequences of a bush-fire. It seemed incendiarism, if not arson. We just could not do it.

Then I got a shock. Big-boy Dane shot up and yelled: 'Vell, take my advize and do it straidaway. To-morrow morning. You shaps will put off again, udderwise, and neffer . . . Why, of course, now is the best time of all! It's all as dry as the deffil. Blaze away! Fire! Giff 'em hell!' He flung his big fists out wide, acting to the top of his bent, and looking at his gallery.

Joe seized his chance. 'He's quite right,' he said. I looked at Andy. This time Andy did not lift that left eyebrow.

'O.K.' I agreed.

A moment's silence, all thinking. Then Joe: 'I'll tell the men about the horses and—'

'Yes,' put in Andy, 'I'll bet there is nothing much for them to do. Everything thought of and ready, eh, Joe?'

I had a good stretch and got back into bed again.



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THE daylight was not yet strong enough to put roundness and depth into objects, and the lake was still covered with a tablecloth of mist when we were awakened by the jackasses. First a chuckle or two; then bursts of uncontrollable laughter. These cheerful 'heralds to the morn' enjoy the joke of being alive again. Andy brewed some fresh tea and got out the big homemade loaf. Then, as the magpies and bell-birds started, the horses were brought round. They were plain-saddled: no Mexican pommels, no lassos, nor anything fancy, except that on either side of each saddle hung a rice-bag filled with wax-vestas—thousands of matches. And, as each rider got settled on his horse, he was passed up a board on which was tacked a large junk of sandpaper. Once in the area to be burned down, you had to strike the match quickly across the board and let it drop *before* it burst into flame. And, you mustn't let the head of a match get caught under your finger-nail!

It was only a mile and a half to the sea from the homestead. The idea was to start there and work up to the lakes. So we struck off at once in that direction. You could sense that it was going to be a real roaster of a day. But as we rode through the bush it was fresh, light morning air, tree-filtered and mildly flower-scented, that we breathed. We felt tough and fit. Not a living creature was to be seen. Yet all around was parrot-talk, tit-chirping, magpie-chatter, thrush-song, and a treeful of cockatoos made a funny, noisy bird-parliament.

We had a short canter on the beach and then climbed a path that led to the top of a cliff. There we drew our mounts together and Joe got out the map. The rich, deep diapason of the sea swelled behind us as we looked down upon the whole-scale map of last night's planning spread out below us in wonderful colours—in the distance, blue masses of mountain, sea, and sky; and, in the foreground, mingling and contrasting tones of brown and yellow from the dry forests, with dazzling wriggles from the watercourses in the sunlight. This is what we were conspiring to scorch black!

'That's Sussex Inlet over there,' said Joe, pointing to the left with his stockwhip at a great glistening water mirror, shaped like a fern leaf from its endless sharp thrusts into the small valleys and re-entrants of the land. 'The Big Lake is in front beyond that range.' Yes. We all knew where it was without any map.

For some reason, eagles were always hovering over it. There was one of them up in the sky over it now, making an excellent marker.

I suddenly heard a crackling, and smelt smoke. It was Christian. He had already started firing the sword-grass. He could not wait for the fun to begin. It was an isolated patch and burned itself out in a few moments.

We three brothers rode on a little way and at once found the real stuff—everything dry and air-spaced as though it had been set for kindling. Christian spotted it and yelled to us to wait a bit for him, but we knew that he would have plenty of this sort of thing later on, so down went our first salvo. The result amazed me. At first no flame was to be seen in the strong sunlight. But I heard the moan and sigh of uprushing air like a gasp of pain from a ghost. Then the flames leaped to the assault in the manner of infantry. A barrage of smoke rolled forward, followed by the black, wavy outline of the advance. The sound of musketry rose in a furious crescendo where the leaves and grass were thick. The very air seemed to be on fire. The heat drove the horses to a sudden change of pace, for it increased as though a switch were being turned.

In a rough amphitheatre of rocks there was a patch of a peculiar growth called grass-tree. It has a stumpy, twisting trunk that oozes resin from which varnish is made, and it is crowned with a kind of sharp-edged grass. Almost hiding these oddities was a mass of parched, straight-standing plants resembling thin bamboo. They stood in regular rows like soldiers on parade. And, like soldiers in old-time warfare, their ranks were broken, and they fell in writhing groups. The grass-trees were left behind them smouldering and bubbling over with boiling and smoking resin, just as oil-tanks nowadays pour boiling and flaming liquid down their sides after a bombardment. Then sporadic glowings showed in places amongst the light, white ash, suggesting that mopping up operations were finishing off the last resistance.

However, there was no time to wait and watch. The others had moved on, steadily firing. I knew that because of the high-flying black pieces ahead. I turned in the saddle to look at Christian. The hot air rising between us waved like a gigantic flag, unfurling and furling, bending and streaming out to full. Through its transparency the man-and-horse figure was distorted, crazily floating and



## AUSTRALIAN FIREBUGGING

swaying. But the arms were working in steady cadence. Christian was safe and enjoying himself.

I FELT my horse's back tip sharply forwards and the stiff, propping, jolting movement as he picked his way among the stumps and stones on a quick downward slope. We were following a wallaby track down a valley. I saw the two brothers for a moment round a curve of scattered gum-trees, and noticed that they had stopped firing. Then they seemed to ride through an arch and were lost to view. But they had started a ring of fires on the base of the hillside. Round the bend was a creek running into the valley. My mount splashed into the swiftly-slipping water, leaving a turbulence of swirling mud and bubbles twisting through the clearer shallows like a ship's smoke drifting over the sea. I felt his muscles tighten and stretch beneath me as he took the bank on the other side.

There, a few yards ahead, was the arch. It was the natural door to a magnificent forest of very tall trees. Somehow it seemed appropriate that there had been no match-throwing in this tree cathedral. It seemed right, too, that the horses' hooves made no noise on the ground muted by thickly-covering bark and fern. It was silent in here, but not the silence of death. The huge tree-trunks streaming upwards formed columns that were instinct with life. The bark hung from them in sheets, revealing the beautiful living flesh and mottling effect. Overhead, the branches and foliage built the vaulted roof. The sun filtering down through the leaves made a dappled carpet on our track, and marine-green light slanted into the forest depths.

My two brothers waited for Christian and me to catch up. We all stood together for a moment in the cool silence. Then, in a compact body, we swished through the deep bracken. Yes, we vandals knew that fire of our making was advancing towards this, too. We intended to burn it down, but not without some 'compunctious visitings of nature.' There were flannel-flowers by the rocks in the creek. We still had the staghorn orchids at home that we had taken from these very trees. The waratah, Australia's national emblem, grew in the bush here; we could see the flowers in their bolt upright stateliness, scarlet in colour, in shape like a sculptural symbolic torch. There was Christmas-bush and

boronia. But all that was now too late to worry about.

As we turned out of the bracken and wound up towards a small, sandy flat that was just at the forest's edge, there was a sound exactly like dropping a mail-bag on to the ground from the mail-van. It was repeated several times in succession. Christian saw them first and pointed. Wallabies! Two of them, hopping at great speed. No, 'hopping' is not the word for the imposing course of these gentle creatures. They move in a way that no other living thing can: they bound forward so that they seem to be airborne most of the time. It was impossible to see, but it may be that one of them was a mother carrying the little one in her pouch. Anyway, there was nothing that we could do about it, and they were safe.

Further on we came upon one of our favourite views on the whole of our land. It was late in the morning now and we were hungry. So we stopped where a little waterfall splashed down on to hollow rocks. There we lit a fire for cooking. Joe managed it. He built up a huge gumwood roarer, letting it burn without adding more fuel. When it stopped crackling, popping, and spitting, the flames died down a little. There was a touch of blue in them where they rose like waving fire-plants from the wood, which broke up into squarish blocks of black and red and molten gold. Then he knocked it all flat and spread it out into a long line. Out of it stole the faintest, softest aroma, more a subtle pleasing of the senses than a definite perfume. We made tea and toast and grilled rainbow-trout. Lunch was on the self-service principle: each man took a big piece of toast from the fire, put a blob of butter on it, and folded it so that he could pick up a trout from the ashes. That was a regal banqueting-hall indeed! We set our mugs of tea on the rocks, munched away at our trout sandwiches, and gazed at the majestic view of bold headlands, sweeping beach curves, great mountain-ranges, and rolling ocean.

WE were sitting after the meal, our bodies warmly moulded to the rocks, our consciousness drifting in the shimmering colour changes of the distance, when I noticed Joe take the pipe from his mouth and slightly turn his head. Then we all heard it—a growing rolling and rumbling that came through the ground as well as through the air,

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a sound as old as mankind's battles, the thunder of wildly-galloping horses' hooves. Next instant we saw four animals dash out of the cover of the forest and make across the open flat between ourselves and the sea. They were brumbies, wild horses, the roving creatures of forest and plain. They caught sight of us, swerved towards us, and stopped very abruptly in a little swirl of dust. A fine picture of animals alarmed they made. Their long tails reaching down to the ground and their flowing manes gave them an untamed appearance at any time, but now they were white-eyed, their nostrils dilated, their flanks heaving. Frankly, we felt ashamed of ourselves. Andy spoke for us all when he took off his hat and called out to them: 'Our apologies, ladies and gentlemen.' They turned and galloped off.

Then we saw why. While we had been picnicking the whole forest as well as the scrubland had taken fire. A raging tempest of flame was tearing along. Miles and miles of country were alight. The conflagration had risen to the treetops and was spreading right across the leafy roof. What we had witnessed before was as a brook to an ocean. This was a gale, a hurricane of fire. It was frightening to us, even though we thought of the water barriers. No need, obviously, for any more match-throwing. On the contrary, could this awful devil be kept in bounds?

Now the stampede of the creatures began in earnest. No one would believe that the forest contained so many wallabies as appeared. Little animals darted across the flat and disappeared into the bracken. They hardly showed themselves, but rabbits and bandicoots were sometimes recognisable. Birds that are usually not to be either seen or heard in the heat of the day were flying about, but in a curious way: they would settle and then fly off again—short, rapid, unorganised activity, the very essence of panic. A gawky goanna swayed across a little sand-patch and disappeared up a tree.

Then it struck us that we had better follow the animals' example and get away in time. We gathered up the picnic material and made off for the little lake and home.

We had left the waterfall about a mile behind and started up a small ravine when we all felt at one moment that the air was getting unbearably hot. Surely, we thought, the fire has not got this far! Our answer came with the surprise of an explosion. A tree on our

track became in an instant a blazing torch. All its neighbours at once acted similarly, so that we were faced with a wall of leaping flame. I felt an incongruous cold shiver course through me, and my horse suddenly swung round. The others had already turned about. In that second we were all thinking the same thing: Where was the flank of the conflagration? If the lakes should not stop it, then we might be trapped ourselves in the very disaster we had feared.

We brought our horses as near to each other as we could, but it was not possible to keep them still enough for us to have a proper talk over our situation. By this time they were thoroughly frightened—and so were we, to tell the truth. Then Joe raised his arm and pointed with his stockwhip. Of course! Make for the beach! It would be a bit round-about, but, if it was space and water that was needed, the Pacific Ocean would surely do.

WE had to rein in the quivering horses while going down the stump- and boulder-strewn ravines until we reached a long flat that led to the beach. But, once there, we gave them their heads.

It was a strange business, that gallop. I have admitted that we were sharing the fear of all the other animals, yet I believe we also enjoyed ourselves at the same time; we humans *are* complex creatures! Just as I vaguely thought how awful it would be if the horse were to put his foot in a rabbit's hole and both man and beast should be caught up by the fire . . . the billy-can and the four enamel mugs shook out of the tucker-bag and clattered behind. I could see out of the corner of my eye one of them bounding and bouncing over some stones and sounding a tinny tocsin. It mixed fun into my fear and excitement. But it scared the horse.

Somehow you cannot think when your horse is galloping, urged on by his own fierce emotion. You can only feel as you are carried away by the mad music. This was truly elemental stuff, a composition with fire and water, fear and flight for theme, the primordial rhythm hammered out *fortissimo* on rude earth, the mood very literally *con fuoco*. I often think of it now and feel again through the living body of my horse the throb and beat of the race, the dynamic rise in tempo when the utensils fell; the *rallentando* and *diminuendo* as the sand-dunes came into sight.

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It was no use our kidding ourselves: when we trotted on to the beach we were feeling pretty shaken by that escape. We dismounted and led our horses in the cool sea-air. The closely-packed sand shrieked gently as we walked over it and little puffs of grit blew into our eyes and mouths. We noticed that the animals were powdered over with fine ash and fluff from the burnt leaves and grass. Our own faces were somewhat nigger-minstrel blackened and had two clean white lines washed straight back from the outer corner of the eyes. Christian's big-kid face was the most partyish and I called something awfully witty to Andy, but he wasn't listening to me. He and Joe were standing still beside their horses. 'Good God,' I heard Joe say, 'just look at that!' We followed his eyeline to one of those crouching-lion headlands jutting out into the sea. It was as though fire was showing water how it, too, could dance havoc. A single monster flame-wave swept over the great bluff and dashed to the cliff's edge. There it met the rising wind and curled back on itself in the way a horse would rear back on its haunches. It rose higher than ever towards the sky, waving and struggling against the wind, and then slowly dropped with exhaustion. It filled me not only with awe, but also with apprehension for what might be going on inland: the men, the house, were they safe? Could the lakes and Inlet really hold up the wildfire?

Joe must have been thinking about the same subject at that moment, but to a different tune. 'Well, goodo,' he cried. 'We were lucky to see that. Let's go home.' Then he explained that the fire must have travelled over the stretch of land between here and the lake, so that we now would be able to ride over it. Well, he should know. He was the real bushman of the family.

We swung into the saddle and followed him. It was, for all that, a definite risk, that ride home. The bark of the trees was still burning and the undergrowth was smoking and incandescent in places. Still worse was the danger of falling trees. Several times there was that ominous crack like a rifle-shot when a big tree's fibres snap. And the heat! My face was stinging so that I often put my hands over my eyes. It was all one immense, grim,

smoking ruin that we were going through. I was surprised to see the horses go on. The small track must have been just bearable to their feet. But what a relief when we came over the last rise and looked down at our little house, standing in its tiny garden playing Narcissus with its reflection in the lake!

WHEN the dogs had given us their noisy welcome and the horses had been stabled, we dashed into the lake. We forgot all about the heat and anxiety in the sheer physical luxury. At last, just as the sun was setting, we forced ourselves to come out of the water and go in to supper.

After the meal we went out on to the verandah. Now we could see against the dark foil of the distant hills the result of our day's work. The whole twelve miles were alight and casting a red glare high up into heaven. Against this background, black and red flights of squawking cockatoos and shrieking parrots wheeled in confusion.

No wonder that there have been fire-worshippers! A conflagration on this scale has all the attributes of a fear-god or a devouring monster. It was roaring as it advanced, boughs snapping loudly, great trees crashing, as though terrific jaws were closing on the hills. Like a blow from its paw, flames hundreds of yards in length would rush along the treetops to the summit of a mountain and strike down the bush as a lion strikes down a waterbuck.

This fury was followed by a great calm. High over the thickening darkness the mountains rose transfigured in glowing garments of gold and purple, their crests flame-encircled.

*Give me my robe, put on my crown; I have  
Immortal longings in me.*

Black and redder the scene changed, the lake a deep cauldron, fired within, something about it that recalled the Old Testament and hell.

It was over two years later when I saw the place again. It had not all turned from epic red to pastoral green. No, rather would you have to paint it green spots on brown background. But the cattle were in good condition.

# Electric Writing

## *The Telegram in Growth and Decline*

F. GEORGE KAY

TELEGRAMS are in trouble. During the current financial year of 1953-54 the estimated loss will be more than £4½ million. The buff-coloured slip of paper, which has been harbinger of good news and bad for more than eighty years, is probably nearing the end of its history, so far as inland communication is concerned. The ubiquitous telephone has replaced it.

The passing into near-oblivion of such a vital public service cannot but arouse in many a sense of sweet sorrow. While young folk to-day have quite likely never sent or received a telegram in their lives, except of the greetings type, their parents and grandparents can doubtless recall momentous occasions where the telegram played its part. Every event from birth to death used to be commemorated by the telegram. It brought the glorious news of the passing of examinations, details of the time of arrival of wealthy uncles, congratulations to the newly-wedded couple. It announced trains missed and shares to buy. It was typical of an age of leisure where speed was already becoming a factor. Later it was not fast enough for the increasing tempo of life.

The telegram is dying as it flourished—in a bewildering series of financial crises. It is one of the modern public utility services which has never proved profitable. And its story is a surprisingly long one.

NEARLY two hundred years ago the first suggestion was made for 'electric writing.' The man responsible for the idea is unknown. He merely signed himself 'C.M.' at the end of an article in the *Scots Magazine* of 17th February 1755. The most likely person of these initials is Dr Charles

Morrison, an Edinburgh surgeon interested in the phenomena of electricity. His suggestion was to use for each letter of the alphabet twenty-six wires between two magnets, an impulse of current moving the distant magnet painted with the same letter as the one at the near end of the wire.

The article was merely regarded as a piece of interesting theory, and not until 1816 did anyone actually construct an effective telegraph. The inventor was a man named Francis (afterwards Sir Francis) Ronalds, who festooned his Hammersmith garden with nine miles of wire. An impulse of current agitated two pith balls which jerked a dial round until the desired letter appeared in a slit. During the Napoleonic War, invasion had been a real danger, and the War Office had a chain of semaphore stations between London and the Channel coast. The system of passing messages by wooden arms was cumbersome and could not, of course, work at night or in misty weather. Ronalds now offered his electric method, but was told that the conclusion of the French war rendered telegraphs of any description totally unnecessary and that no system other than the semaphore would be adopted, so he duly abandoned his idea.

The man who gave Britain the telegram was Charles Wheatstone, and he just won the race against the American Samuel Morse, with the result that Morse was refused a patent in this country. Wheatstone, a man of thirty-five when his telegraph was perfected in 1837, was a remarkable scientist. He never took his learning very seriously; instead, he used his knowledge for bizarre tricks. As a youth he earned a considerable income with his magic lyre, a device which reproduced notes without being touched. Actually, the vibrations were



transferred by a steel rod from a musician hidden in another room. Wheatstone thought this such a good notion that he tried to obtain finance to lay a steel rod from London to Edinburgh. He estimated that sound vibrations would travel from one capital to the other in three seconds. Added years taught him the futility of such an idea and he turned to electrical methods. In 1837 he went into partnership with a retired army doctor, William Cooke, and together they patented their electric telegraph. Their invention was installed on the London-Blackwall Railway during the following year, and then on the Great Western Railway from Paddington to Slough.

Though these systems were available for public use, no interest was aroused, and merely railway business was transacted over them. Then an event occurred which was remarkably similar to the famous finding of Dr Crippen on a transatlantic liner by means of wireless telegraphy. A man was seen leaving a house where a woman was soon afterwards found dead. Passers-by had spotted him hurrying to the station. The only train to Paddington at the time was a slow one, and a warning message was sent by telegraph. The system had no 'Q' and the message was spelled out as: 'The wanted man is dressed as a Kwaker.' At Paddington an alighting passenger dressed in the distinctive cloak of the sect was duly apprehended and was so dumbfounded that he admitted the crime.

The newspaper reports of the arrest made the telegraph instantly popular. The railway companies saw the chance of increased revenue from a service of value to them in any case, and the familiar lines of wires we know to-day began to appear alongside the new iron roads of Britain. For a time almost all telegraph services were at railway stations, and outlying places had no service of any kind. Private companies sprang up to run a telegram service, with the result that busy towns had several rival companies, and small communities had none at all.

In 1868 the Post Office was authorised to acquire all the inland telegraphs. The companies did very well indeed out of the transfer, for in one way and another the Post Office paid out nearly £11 million. In the nick of time Parliament thwarted various ingenious schemes of erecting telegraph-wires, sending a few telegrams, and then insisting that the

Post Office authorities buy the goodwill and assets.

TO a great extent the new service was as important a development as the penny post. Towns and villages, notably in distant parts of Scotland and Wales, were put on the telegraph service with some 2800 offices available. Names and addresses went free, and the message cost 1s. for 20 words. A defect was the charge for delivery. At 6d. per double mile the charge became fantastic when a flood of telegrams was sent to some hunting-party in the remote Highlands. But the public made good use of the new electric writing service, and some 10 million telegrams were sent in the first year. Though the service could not pay off its enormous capital debt, it more than covered its running expenses. This happy situation ended when Parliament insisted that the minimum cost be reduced to 6d. in 1883, though the number rose to 50 million telegrams a year. As part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations free delivery within three miles of a post office was introduced, and the yearly figure climbed to 90 million. Soon afterwards the competition of the telephone began to make itself felt in the big towns. It has slowly and inexorably continued until its near-victory to-day.

The many grey hairs which the running of the telegraph service has given to generations of Post Office officials have at times been needlessly augmented. The huge amount of business conducted by telegram between sportsmen and bookmakers created various ingenious ideas for fraud, all of which necessitated intricate and expensive precautions to ensure that the time-stamps were beyond question.

But the major exploit which caused an unknown amount of loss was one of the cleverest examples of stamp forgery ever detected. The criminal concerned was a telegraph-clerk at the Stock Exchange in London. A special post office existed there in the 1870's, handling many thousands of telegrams in those days before the telephone. The rate at that time was still twenty words for 1s., and the majority of telegrams were kept to this figure. Every day the clerk arrived from his home in the suburbs with a stock of homemade 1s. stamps. The procedure was for a stockbroker's messenger to hand in the telegram, have the number of words counted, hand over the 1s.,



and receive the stamp for affixing. The form was then handed back for transmission, the stamp cancelled, and the message transmitted. The form was filed in case of query, and in due time sold for pulping. Thus the stamp was only in the possession of the purchaser for a matter of seconds. It was, in point of fact, quite a good forgery, though it had no watermark.

The clerk had to retire on the grounds of ill-health—though it may have been that he was that rare criminal, one who knew when to stop—and received the thanks of the Post Office with a pension. It was estimated that he personally handled about 1000 telegrams a day, which brought him an income of £150 a week, on the assumption that he discreetly sold one forgery for one genuine stamp. As he successfully flourished for more than two years, his ill-gotten gains may be imagined.

In 1898 a collector found one of the forgeries, but it was regarded as an isolated instance. Not until 1912 did some workmen, repairing the roof of a paper warehouse at Watford, Hertfordshire, find bales of these ancient telegrams sent for pulp and never used. They sold some to a stamp-dealer; he saw the stamps were forgeries, and the story was out. Though the initials on the forms revealed the identity of the clerk who had

handled them, no publicly-reported action was taken or the forger's name revealed. It may well be that he had by then lived out his thirty years of pleasant retirement in affluence and peace.

The laxity of the accounting system which permitted such a fraud to flourish quite undetected was a significant pointer to one of the defects of the telegram service of those days. It was some time before the organisation was put on a sensible footing, and by then the zenith of popularity had passed. Improvements on the technical side, ingenious ideas like the greetings telegrams, have never really solved the problem of making a profit from a service which had to be cheap to be widely used, but which necessitated, at its peak period before it shared facilities with the telephone, 14,000 offices and 310,000 miles of wire with an army of servants ranging from skilled engineers to the whistling telegram-boys.

Now the telegram seems likely to become so expensive that it will rank as a luxury form of communication or need changing into a sort of express-letter service. To an older generation who found it so comforting to say: 'Well, we can always send a wire,' the beginning of the end is rather saddening, one more token of the passing of cherished other days and other ways.

## The Oak and the Crocus

*Said the old, old Oak: 'I've never yet  
Seen any living thing  
As lovely as you crocus flowers  
When first you greet the Spring.'*

*'I wish I was as strong as you,'  
The little Crocus spoke,  
'But a million million crocuses  
Won't make a single oak.'*

*'I know we're pretty in our frocks  
Of purple, gold, and white;  
But you may stay a hundred years,  
And we'll be gone to-night.'*

*Said the Oak: 'I've weighed that problem,  
Little crocus, just like you,  
And I think I've found the answer's  
That this big world needs us two.'*

HELEN PUNCH.



## Donald on the Target

A. A. HENDERSON

NOT long after I reached the Western Highlands I came on two men and several children trying to start a recalcitrant, dilapidated lorry, and since they seemed in difficulties I lent a hand with the pushing. When, wheezing hysterically, the aged engine came to life and the lorry shuddered off down the rough farm-road we started talking as we made our way back to the steading.

Since I was a newcomer, it was not long before the conversation developed into an inquest into my life and work, and, since it was rather cold and the West Highlanders are a hospitable people, it was soon proposed that we go inside for a strupaig.

We must have been observed, for as I passed the kitchen window I overheard in a woman's voice the startling remark: 'He iss coming in, Donald, you petter put in your eye,' and the gruff answer: 'He iss only a pluddy forester, anyway.'

In the round of introductions that followed my entrance, however, I noticed that Donald had a glass-eye, and judged that it was in place in my honour.

Seated by the log-fire, on which some coals had been hastily arranged in an attempt at camouflage, and fortified with tea, my new friends resumed their role of inquisitors,

although rarely putting directly the question they wanted answered. They did not even ask where I came from, but inquired whether the ferry crossing had been rough. When I said that I had come by train and crossed no ferry, they said that they had understood that it was from the Islands I had come. By then I felt obliged to tell them that my home was in Aberfeldy in Perthshire.

DONALD, who had been taking no part in the conversation, here decided that the time had come for him to speak. Half-turning in his seat he spat noisily in the general direction of the fire, which was on his blind side, and narrowly missed the teapot on the hob. 'In the war I wass in Ballyluie wiss the Scouts,' he said with the air of a man who had, just because of that, beer everywhere.

'The Lovats?' I asked innocently, feeling some pride in the mention of my brother's regiment.

'Aye, what other?' said Donald rhetorically, spitting again, this time, to his wife's evident satisfaction, with greater accuracy.

'My brother served with them during the war,' said I.

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'Ugh, things iss not what they wass. It wass caffalry when I wass wiss them. Do you know, poy, in nineteenfourteen we walk all the way from Porstree in Skye to Ballyluie in Perss on horseback? We wass camping under canvas at Killiecronkie too. Poy, it wass cold! Snow efferywheres after Ard Ferry.'

THE other visitors were drifting away towards the door with the casual air that comes of long acquaintance. Another minute and I was left alone at Donald's mercy held by the unwinking attention of his solitary eye. His wife was now washing the crocks in the scullery, and it was obvious my fate was sealed. He knew it, too, I could see that, as with supreme confidence he wiped his nose between finger and thumb and rubbed his hand on his trousers before continuing with all the enjoyment of one who has for long been held silent.

'And the deers, poy, they wass all offer the place like you will see the sheep now. Sousands and sousands of them, the stags wiss their sroats all swelled up wiss the roaring.'

'Ah well, I'm sure you would find a bit of venison a pleasant change from army rations,' I ventured, and then, remembering his regiment's reputation, 'and I'm sure you would have a few good stalkers and poachers in the Scouts.'

'Venison! We wass fed up of it. When we made camp at Cluanie I wass sent out wiss my rifle and, do you know, I get all we need for a week wiss chust the one shot!'

'Surely there couldn't have been very many of you then,' I said.

'Sree hundred of us! Sree hundred men, not counting the officers and the horses! Sree hundred!'

This was said with evident relish. Apparently I had taken his bait.

'Oh, come now, surely you're not asking me to believe that you kept an army of three hundred in meat for a week with one stag! I know they're not that big,' I said, slightly piqued that he should think me so callow as to credit such a statement even for the sake of politeness.

'No, not one stag I'm saying, putt chust the same wiss only the one shot! Wait now and I will tell you.' Donald turned, fished a log from under a heap of newspapers, and threw it on the fire.

'YOU will not be knowing Cluanie? No. If you wass coming by road, now, you would be seeing it. There the hills are steep, wiss great deep glens running between them, and all wiss burns in them running down to the river where we wass camp. The officer, he come to me and say: "Donald, you go wiss MacKerlich and see if you get somesing for fresh meat and put the liver to the inn for the officers."

'We set out, then, and take a look at the hill through the glass. There he wass, poy, a peauty of a stag chust a half-a-mile up the hill, so nothing would do but we stalk it. The snow wass not at the river, putt as we climb we see it iss lower than we think, and by the time we get in range to where we saw him he hass gone higher and iss standing on the skyline. Anyway, I go to a rock where I get a good rest for the rifle, for they wass heaffy ones then, and, sure enough, when I fire he come down first time.

'I shout to MacKerlich to come help me wiss him and there and then we hurry on up to where he would be lying. When I get there the snow iss deeper, a foot anyway, and so wet ass a sponge, putt there iss no stag, only blood and a trail where he kick hiss way to the steep on the other side, and a noise like sunder coming from below. So I go and look, and what do you think I see? Rolling away down into the glen iss a ball of snow so big ass the Stornoway poat and getting pigger and pigger, wiss my stag in the middle! Going so hard he wass, rolling and picking up snow, so he roll the halfway up the other side, then settle back to the middle and start to follow the burn down the glen. He chust clear efferysing in front of him, rocks and efferysing.'

'There iss your pail, Donald. It iss time for the milking,' his wife interrupted him. 'You would sit there ceilidhing all day if you could.'

'A minute, a minute, woman, the cows will wait!' He turned to me again. 'We run after him ferry eassy, for there iss no snow behind him, and chust near the mouth of the glen he break going over a waterfall. When we get to him, the water iss breaking all the ball, and ass sure ass a cat iss hairy we had the Devil's own chob standing at the foot of the pool below the fall fishing out everysing that floated down to us.

'When we get it all laid out on the bank I set off for help to get it down. You know what wass in that snowball? There wass the stag

## THE LOST TREASURE OF THUNDER BAY

I shoot through the neck, two other stags, ten hinds, four yearling calves, forty-three hares, and ninety-nine rabbits!

He reached for the milk-pail held out to him by his now irate spouse and rising stiffly made for the door.

'But, Donald, surely, man, you might

have made it the hundred rabbits,' I exclaimed.

Turning in the doorway he eyed me with the look normally reserved by countrymen for their ignorant brethren from the cities. 'If you were knowing me petter you would not be expecting me to make a liar of myself for one wee rabbit.' And he set off for the byre.

# The Lost Treasure of Thunder Bay

T. HERAPATH

WITH the Canadian waterway project coming again into view, linking the Great Lakes with the St Lawrence, a half-forgotten tale may be retold. It is a story of heroic endeavour, fabulous success, and, at the last, failure.

ON Thunder Bay, at the western extremity of Lake Superior, lies a popular holiday-resort. Hundreds of such play-places are found by Canada's inland seas, but this one is different, for here and there among the gay summer cottages is a relic of earlier times. A crumbling wall, the remains of a substantial chimney-stack tell of houses made to withstand the Ontario winter in days gone by. And on a small island in the bay can be seen the gaunt outlines of decaying works. The pretty resort, in fact, has a past that contrasts strangely with the carefree present.

It was in the summer of 1868 that a Scotsman named Thomas Macfarlane came prospecting for copper to Thunder Bay, sent out by the Montreal Mining Company; with him were twelve or fourteen men and a junior called Brown. In order to take observations of the shore-line, Macfarlane planted pickets on the small islets facing the location; on one of these, a spit of rock ninety feet across and barely eight out of the water, Brown landed with his party.

The insignificant hump was nicknamed from its shape Skull Rock. Probably no white man had trodden it before, for the miners saw that which made them forget all about copper. A rich vein of silver was clearly visible, traversing the surface of the rock; large nuggets could actually be seen under the water. The indications were that they had stumbled on one of nature's wealthiest caches.

While an account of the discovery was travelling to Montreal by the slow posts of the period Macfarlane set to work. The prize was great, but the difficulties of securing it were immeasurably greater. The islet was three-quarters of a mile from the mainland and much exposed to storms on the west, south-west, and east; on the south-east another small island protected it, but insufficiently. In order to reach the silver, it would be necessary to sink a shaft on the narrow foothold afforded by the rock, which in bad weather was swept by waves and sometimes submerged. Could the thing be done? The Scotsman thought it could.

There was no time to lose. It was already mid-July; only two months of summer remained. A shaft-house was built on the tiny islet and a boarding-house, storehouse, and stables run up at the nearest point on the shore.

All through the bitter Canadian winter the little party worked in spite of the handicaps



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imposed by ice, sub-zero temperatures, and the pounding of heavy seas against Skull Rock or, as it was renamed, Silver Islet. By the spring of 1869, 16,000 dollars' worth of ore had been shipped to Montreal.

The directors of the Montreal Company viewed the venture with misgiving, nevertheless. Copper was all right; it was copper they had reckoned on. But this business of digging silver out of a lake was too much like a fairy-tale. So the treasure islet was sold to an American syndicate headed by Alexander Sibley of New York.

Macfarlane knew nothing of the transaction; it must have been a blow to him when a steamer arrived with a raft of timber and a scow in tow: William Frue, mining-engineer, had come to take over on behalf of the new owners. The story now shifts from Macfarlane—who, however, was retained by the American company—to the man whose genius outwitted the fury of the stormiest lake in North America.

**F**RUЕ brought with him a working-party of thirty men, two horses, machinery, stores, and provisions. A breakwater of timber filled with cement was built around the islet and the mouth of the shaft enclosed by a stone cofferdam. By the end of November 77 tons of silver had been sent to Newark, New Jersey. Specimens were also shipped to England and smelted at Swansea.

Soon, however, the real fight began. The first winter had been unusually mild; the one that now drew on came with all the rigours of the Middle West. Ice-floes partly blocked the channel between the islet and the mainland, making it difficult for the miners to cross. In February a storm broke disastrously. Some 200 feet of the breakwater were smashed to matchwood and the mouth of the mine-shaft was choked with the debris. It looked as though the lake had won.

But Frue was not so easily beaten. In a surprisingly short time the damage was repaired and by the close of navigation in November 1870 485 tons of ore had been shipped to the United States.

The little rock on which Brown had landed that first summer day had now grown out of all knowledge. Its surface had been artificially extended to hold the upper mine-works, storehouses, a blacksmith's shop, and permanent quarters for some of the men.

A lighthouse stood at the eastern angle of the island, and big docks on its lee side accommodated an increasing volume of shipping. On shore, a town had sprung up with schools, churches, and big reducing-works.

The lake had not given up yet, however. The main shaft had been sunk to a depth of 300 feet, when water from below burst in and flooded the mine. At the same time a storm, more furious than the first, battered the island: great rocks were hurled about like hailstones, the blacksmith's shop was blown bodily away.

Once more the undefeated Frue repaired, this time installing mammoth pumps in order to clear the lower levels of the mine and to prevent a recurrence of flooding. The miracle of Silver Islet stood to all appearance impregnable.

By now Frue had probably had enough of these sensational duels with nature, for he left the company. The mine was worked under his successors with varying output for the next fourteen years. Thunder Bay seemed to be flooded with silver; the settlement on shore had a flourishing population; all was going merrily when the winter of 1884 closed in. Only one thing was a vital necessity—coal.

**T**HE great pumps lived on coal; without it, the fires that kept the savage waters of Lake Superior at bay would go out. There were no coalfields near, but supplies were brought every six months by boat. In October the inhabitants of Silver Islet were watching confidently for the familiar collier. The ship was a little late, but it would come. Weeks went by, and a shadow of anxiety crept over the watching faces. The pumps were put on half rations, and still the collier delayed.

At last, on New Year's Day 1885, came heavy tidings by dog-team. The coal would never come now! Storm had driven the captain of the collier to port on his way, his crew had deserted, and he had not been able to engage another. The precious fuel lay ice-bound, while the fires went out. So rang the knell of Silver Islet; the lake had won.

By the summer of that year the once-busy town was deserted, the shafts and galleries that had been made with such risk and labour filled with water. Three million tons of ore



## HINDU MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

had been mined during Silver Islet's brief lifetime. How much more remains in the grip of Superior, who can say?

One or two survivors lived, until lately, in the neighbourhood. They used to tell how,

on winter nights when the summer cottages are empty, ghostly lights move on the island and how, through the rumble of wind and surge, can be heard the rattle of a hoisting-cable, the breathing of the pumps.

# Hindu Marriage Ceremonies

S. V. O. SOMANADER, F.R.G.S.

NOT long ago I was invited to a Hindu wedding among our local Tamils, and I returned home with the impression that, after all, the elaborate ceremonies were not just a big and meaningless show, but that every item of the marriage ritual had a religious or moral significance behind it. It is true that in the observance of these rites in different localities there are variations and modifications according to the beliefs, means, and status of the parties concerned, but that did not rob the nuptial celebrations I witnessed of their splendour and glamour.

Before describing the ceremony proper performed on the wedding day it would be well, perhaps, to say something about the preliminary arrangements and practices that are gone through to effect a happy union between the parties. First of all, after studying closely the caste, status, and the relative positions of the families, the bride's parents seek the help of a good friend or relative to visit the bridegroom's parents with a view to mooted the proposal.

The dowry, after the subject has been tactfully broached, forms an important item in the discussion. If it finds favour with the bridegroom's parents, they first consult the indispensable astrologer, with the customary offerings of betel leaves, areca nuts, and lime, all placed with money in the same tray for a comparative study of the would-be couple's horoscopes before the final consent is given.

If at the time of the prospective bride's birth

the planet Mars was at the western horizon, the proposal is turned down, as this is believed to forecast her death early in life, and things are, therefore, not likely to go well with the proposed pair after they have entered the wedded state. If, however, the horoscopes point towards a prosperous union, the match is approved, followed by the exchange of visits and presents between the respective parties, who ultimately fix a suitable day and time for the joyful event after the dowry question and other marriage details have been finally settled to avoid trouble later on.

ON an auspicious day, found after consulting the *Panchankam*, the astrological book, a few weeks before the wedding, gold for the 'thali' is melted by the goldsmith at the bridegroom's house amidst much merriment and rejoicing. The thali, which is the nuptial knot or trinket regarded, in lieu of the Western ring, as the sacred bond that unites the happy pair, is beaded to a gold chain or 'kodi,' to be tied round the bride's neck at the wedding ceremony. The thali usually takes the shape of a heart, but generally among the Hindus it is also like a molar tooth, with the figure of the god Pillayar (Siva) on one side and a trident on the other.

After the invitations have been sent out to a host of relatives and friends the houses of the two parties bustle with activity, the excitement growing as the great day approaches.

Close relatives group themselves in the respective houses to lend a helping hand in the grand preparations. Triumphal arches are erected at the entrances to both the residences, and these are decorated with 'thoranams' made of tender coconut-leaves and coconut-buds, bunches of young coconuts or palmyra or plantains, fruits of the screw-pine, paper garlands, flags, lanterns, and multicoloured flowers, to give an air of oriental gaiety and splendour.

Decorated 'pandals' are also erected within the compound for the accommodation of the numerous guests. The erection of the first pole for the pandal at the bride's residence is accompanied by many ceremonial observances. The pandals are draped in white cloth, to signify purity, and exquisitely adorned with tender palm-leaves, flowers, and garlands. At one end of the bride's pandal is erected the 'manavarai' or bridal throne, which comprises a dais richly decorated with patterns of various designs, including animals and birds, figures of deities, statues, and so forth.

Ornamented also with tinsel, beads, and other material of diverse colours, and richly carpeted, the bridal pandal with the throne gives one the impression of a miniature fairyland. It is on this throne that the couple are seated during the nuptial ceremonies, the portion in front of it being set apart for the religious rites, while in the centre of this space is the 'arasanai-kal,' consisting of a dadap-tree (*Erythrina*) branch and a sugar-cane. The lower half of this erection is covered with a gorgeous saree, draped in the shape of an up-turned cone. Between this and the throne is dug the 'omakundam,' the sacrificial fire-pit.

On the night before the wedding an array of presents, ranging from kitchen utensils, like knives, pestle and mortar, to bedroom requisites, like pillows, mattresses, and other bedding, all necessary for setting up a new home, is sent by the bridegroom to the bride's house, the people carrying the gifts to the accompaniment of Indian music, headed with lights, and amidst the firing of crackers. Not infrequently, in this grand pageantry of gift-carrying, which is called 'ka,' bunches of plantains, vegetables like pumpkins, pots of curd, and even goats for the wedding-feast are included.

take place at night. The officiating priest, usually a Brahmin, and his assistants arrange the various things intended for the ceremonies around the nuptial altar awaiting the couple. 'Kumbams,' consisting of brass jugs containing water and wound with thread according to a certain pattern, are placed in a cluster, each vessel carrying coconuts stroked with turmeric and ornamented with chaplets of mango-leaves—all signifying prosperity. Within this array are included silver and brass 'chembus' (vessels), ewers, 'kuthu-vilaku' (oil-lamps), and trays filled with raw rice, fruits, coconuts, vegetables, and other things—all in abundance to signify plenty, and other forms of prosperity. The kumbams themselves represent various groups of deities and planets that are invoked in the ceremony to shower their blessings on the couple.

During all this time the bands of musicians are not idle. While they play their pipes to the accompaniment of the flute, drum, and cymbals, the guests start arriving. The males, all well-dressed to suit the gay occasion, take their seats on carpets on one side in the outer hall, while the ladies, with their glittering jewels and costly sarees—usually those worn as 'koorai' at their own weddings, if married—seat themselves on the carpeted floor on the opposite side, all contributing to the grandeur of what is a most colourful scene.

But, where is the bride! There she is, being led out of an inner apartment into the hall adjoining the wedding pandal. Being brought up in the orthodox Hindu way, she comes with bent head, looking coy and fighting shy of the crowded guests. But she looks charming, with the beady load of jewellery adorning her head, and in her exquisite silk Benares saree worn in the conventional style, set off with the traditional velvet blouse embroidered with gold. In addition, she wears, round her neck, golden jewels set with precious stones, a nose-stud and ear-drops made of brilliants, and glittering head-ornaments crowned with a jasmine coronet on her closely-dressed hair. In short, she looks a real Hindu bride.

More guests pour in, and, as the time approaches for the bridegroom to arrive, the Brahmin priest, in great dignity, begins chanting prayers, and repeating 'sloga' at his seat, which he takes on the floor, facing north, but at right angles to the dais on one side. The stage is thus set, and the atmosphere is tense, for everybody is awaiting the arrival of the bridegroom.

**N**OW to come to the great day—the day of the nuptials, which, more often than not,

## HINDU MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

AT a distance are heard the faint strains of the native music, the sound of drums, and the firing of crackers. Behold, the bridegroom cometh! As he gradually approaches the bride's house in great pomp and with a large procession following him, there is a big stir among the guests. At last he arrives at the gate, and all eyes are on him. He, too, is dressed in Eastern fashion—in immaculate white, with silk 'vershti' and shirt, or in long trousers and a long coat which almost touches his knees. He dons a white and gold-laced turban, and across his shoulders is thrown a narrow gold-brocade shawl tied in a knot on one side. Around his neck glitters a gold chain, to which is attached a large gem-studded pendant which falls on his chest. At the entrance he is met by the bride's party, and the bride's brother, coming forward, pours water at the groom's feet as a sign of loyalty, service, and homage. For this gracious act of 'washing the feet' he receives from the bridegroom a gold ring as a gift. This is followed by 'alathi,' performed by the women. It is intended to protect the bridegroom from the malign influence of the evil-eye.

The bridegroom is then led on 'nila-pavada,' cloth spread on the ground to walk on as a mark of respect, to the decorated bridal throne, where the priest performs the preliminary purification ceremony, 'kappu-kaddu,' in which yellow thread is tied round the bridegroom's wrist and a ring made out of the blade of 'thetpai' grass on one of his fingers. Then comes the bride led by some elderly aunt or other close relative, to be taken to the seat next to the bridegroom on his left. Both sit facing east. Somewhat bashful and excited at sitting so close to him, the bride goes through the same ceremony, the yellow thread being tied round her right hand also, as a mark of this purification.

The priest then proceeds to perform the main rites, every item being initiated by his ringing of a tiny bell. Starting with an offering to Pillayar, he lights the 'omam,' sacrificial fire, in the square pit in front of the couple, with the help of twigs brought from the banyan, fig, mango, bo-tree, margosa, jak, and sandalwood-tree, nursing the fire occasionally. But, curiously enough, he does not allow the fire to blaze up. Instead, he smothers it by pouring rancid butter on it, thereby causing columns of smoke to ascend. This obscures the couple from view for a time and makes the whole atmosphere uncomfort-

able, but the inconvenience is endured in good spirit by all. This rite, accompanied by incantations, is performed to invoke the deities to accept the sacrifices of incense offered and endow the couple with happiness, long life, and prosperity.

The Brahmin then offers incense to the thali and blesses it. This nuptial necklace, with the 'koorei,' an expensive, exquisitely-worked, gold-embossed and bordered saree presented by the groom as a gift to the bride, and corresponding to the Western going-away dress, are now taken round on a tray among the guests, who place both hands gently on them as a symbol of their goodwill and benediction.

When the tray is brought back, the bridegroom hands over the koorei to the bride, who then retires to the nuptial bedchamber with her supporters, who help to dress her with this garment and with the bridegroom's other gift—the velvet blouse worked in gold. Thus, finely attired, she returns to the manavarai amidst much rejoicing. The thali is then tied by the bridegroom, while the priest chants manthras or incantations, and when this is being done the musicians play their strains at their loudest, not only as a demonstration of joy, but also in order that even the chirp of an ominous lizard may not be heard and interpreted by the listeners as prognosticating bad luck or evil. Such an accidental circumstance, if it occurs, is calculated to have a bad psychological effect on the couple, who would naturally wish to start their married life under the happiest auspices.

AFTER the completion of the thali ceremony the couple change places on the dais—the bride now sitting on the bridegroom's right—to signify that they are now married. After garlanding each other the bridegroom leads the bride by the hand, and both walk round the kumbams. While doing the first round they stop at one corner where a grinding-stone has been placed. Taking the right foot of the bride, the groom places it on the stone, the ritual being called 'ami-mirithal.' It is a reminder to the bride of the fate that befell Akalikai in the *Ramayana*, in which great epic, we read, she was cursed by her husband for her unfaithfulness and was changed into a stone, though, later on, she regained her human form, but only at the touch of Rama's foot.

On their last round the couple pause near a big earthen pot filled with water, and both are asked to dip their hands and search for a gold ring dropped into it. This episode causes much merriment, the chivalrous bridegroom usually coming off second best, presumably on purpose, in this treasure-hunt contest. To add to the amusement, this item is repeated thrice. Although this rite does not seem to bear any religious significance, it has probably been included to remove the shyness of a Hindu bride, who has been brought up in the orthodox way.

The next item has an important significance. The bridegroom brings the bride into the open and points out to her a star, Beta Canis Major, saying: 'Lo, there is Arunthathy!' Arunthathy was the consort of Vashista and a pattern for matrimonial chastity, so the hint to the bride becomes plain.

This over, the couple get back to the bridal throne to serve each other with milk behind a screen of white cloth held by the priest and his assistants. This act is to symbolise the couple's willingness to help each other, and to share everything in their married life. Not infrequently, in addition to all these rituals, a milch-cow and calf, generally of a white colour, and tied on the compound, are shown to the wedded pair by the priest as a favourable omen for their future married state.

The rites now come to an end, but the ceremony is not complete without the blessing of the couple by the guests themselves. Beginning with the parents of either party, followed by relatives and friends, all shower their blessings on the happy pair. Each one takes a pinch of raw rice, mixed with turmeric, in both hands and, touching the knees and shoulders, throws it over the heads of the

couple. Though not orally stated, their wish if expressed would be in the following words: 'You shall flourish like the banyan-tree and take root like the aruku grass. You shall shoot up like the bamboo, and live without end.'

The ceremonies being thus concluded, refreshments are now served to the guests, the traditional oil-cakes and other Eastern dainties never being missed. After the final 'namas-karams' have been said, the departing guests are also treated to a betel-chew, the betel-leaf containing sliced areca nuts, lime, cinnamon and other spice rolled up neatly and pinned with cloves before being served on a large brazen tray, while, as a further token of joyful gratitude for honouring the occasion with their presence, the guests are offered on a nickel-plated bowl sweet-scented sandalwood paste to be smeared on the cheeks and neck, and also for placing a 'pottu' or mark on the middle of the forehead. Rose-water, too, is sprinkled on them according to oriental custom. All now depart, except for the closest relatives, who stay back for the wedding-feast and much revelry goes on far into the night, the new couple enjoying themselves without any thought of running away from their folks on a honeymoon.

It will thus be seen that the wedding ceremonies of the Hindus, long and elaborate as they may seem, are performed with solemnity and grace. To the uninitiated and the ignorant they will perhaps be tedious and meaningless, nevertheless to those who can understand and appreciate their significance in the sacred family life of the Hindus the rites are symbolic of the sanctity and importance attached to marriage among these highly-devout people.

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## The Tiff

*When sighs are past  
And all is said,  
And time is vast,  
Untenanted,*

*There will be none  
To be aware  
The sun once shone  
And you were fair.*

*Your beauty lost,  
My singing stilled;  
In chaos tossed,  
By darkness filled;*

*And all that mars  
Our love begun  
Dead with the stars,  
Cold with the sun.*

RICHARD A. GOFTON.





# *A Housemaster's Case-Book*

## I.—Peter Martinshaw

EVERETT BARNES

*Alas, regardless of his doom,  
The little victim plays!*  
After Gray.

I ALWAYS consider it a kind of challenge when I hear people describe public-schoolmasters as hedged in by a wall of tradition and routine, which confines human character, reducing all to a flat sameness and normality. Even if this were true of public-schoolboys—which it is not, except on the most superficial view—it would not be true of their parents, who play a large part in the affairs of housemasters at least. The fathers may themselves have been through the public-school mill, but not the mothers.

Looking back over some thirty years as a housemaster, I feel disposed to meet this challenge, and show that not even the cloistering walls of a public-school can shut out all the oddities and eccentricities of human nature. Let me admit, however, that the episodes I shall put on record are exceptional: a housemaster's life is not entirely spent in lurid anxieties. The greater number of my memories of those years are both pleasanter and duller.

SOMEONE once said to me: 'Schoolmasters never seem to get any older. I suppose it's because they repeat the same actions so often that they are spared the worry of having to think.' This pronouncement makes me smile sardonically when I recall some of the extremely novel situations which have cropped up in my experience and the frantic thought required to deal with them. There was, for example, the case of Peter Martinshaw.

This happened towards the end of the 'twenties. I had not been very long a housemaster in those days and was easily worried by events which did not shape themselves according to the usual routine. I remember clearly my first interview with Martinshaw's mother—a feckless type, I thought, fair-headed and pretty in a rather overblown way. She had married again after divorcing her first husband for desertion; and was now called Mrs Felpham. She told me that Peter was a dear boy, but rather sensitive and highly-strung; he was, she thought, easy to lead, but very difficult to drive. I had already discovered the singular fact that practically every boy in England possessed these identical qualities—

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if we may believe their mothers. Furthermore, the boy, though quite healthy, was easily tired, and I must keep an eye on him when he played exhausting games like rugby football. Of Peter's father, Captain John Martinshaw, she told me that he had been a regular cavalry officer, who had resigned his commission after the war, because he still thought that cavalry should have something to do with horses, and had become an estate-agent. She had custody of the child, but she did not try to prevent the father, who paid the school bills, from seeing him when he liked. The Captain was, according to her, very wild and temperamental, and subject to violent outbreaks of anger, though in normal times he could be quite charming. I reckoned that Mrs Felpham might easily provoke any man to a violent outbreak of anger. The second husband, Mr Felpham, did not visit the school—in fact, I never laid eyes on him.

PETER MARTINSHAW proved himself an extremely likeable boy, cheerful, willing, and sociable. He showed none of that introspective lack of balance which one notices so often in the sons of broken homes. I wondered sometimes whether a rather charming diffidence which he showed could be traced to that influence. He would talk to me or other masters he knew well easily and fluently, without a trace of self-consciousness; then suddenly a doubt would enter his mind that he was saying the wrong thing or making a fool of himself; he would hesitate, blush scarlet, and end his sentence lamely or not at all. A little encouragement would get him going again before long.

He was no flyer intellectually, though always pleasant to teach, because he was so easily interested. He soon showed that I should have my hands full if I tried to stop him tiring himself at 'exhausting games like rugby football.' He was as aggressive a little forward in junior house games as could well be met. One day he came to me and said: 'Please, sir, can I learn boxing, sir?' He habitually used a 'sir' once in about every six words.

His father had been down the day before on one of his occasional visits and had taken him out for a meal. I wondered . . . 'Why do you suddenly want to learn boxing, Martinshaw?' I asked.

'Oh, I don't know, sir. It's a jolly good

thing, sir, isn't it, sir? I mean, you ought to be able to stand up for yourself, sir, and be able to help people in trouble . . . and . . . ' He faltered, went bright-red, and ended vaguely, 'and things like that, sir.'

'Did your father suggest that you should learn boxing?'

'He did mention it, sir.'

'Is he a boxer?'

'Yes, sir—a jolly good one, sir. He was Army lightweight champion before the war, sir.'

Peter had a great admiration for his father, as I knew, and he was not going to be satisfied to neglect this piece of advice. But I had more than a suspicion that boxing, to Mrs Felpham's way of thinking, was an exhausting game like rugby football. So I played for safety. 'We'll have to see what your mother thinks, Martinshaw. Will you write and ask her? If she agrees, I'll put you down.'

Peter looked suddenly depressed. 'I'm sure she won't mind, sir. She doesn't really know anything about boxing, sir, so she couldn't object, sir.'

'Well, write and ask her, and let me know what she says.'

Peter had no need to let me know, because some days later I received a letter from Cannes in Mrs Felpham's enormous hand, spread discursively over four sheets of luxurious paper. Her main ideas, wrapped in a plethora of inconsequent words, were (1) that the violence of Captain Martinshaw was largely due to his love of boxing, and (2) that on no account was boxing to be taught to Peter Martinshaw.

When I broke this news to Peter he looked extremely despondent and, I thought, more than a little rebellious. 'It's rather a shame, sir, don't you think, sir?'

I did think so. If Peter learnt to knock people about, I felt confident he would only knock about people who would be the better for it. But I murmured words of loyalty to maternal wishes.

'If I can't learn boxing, sir, I'll teach myself, sir.'

'Well, don't start fighting, will you?'

'Oh, no, sir,' and Peter departed, looking dutiful and defiant at the same moment.

ABOUT a week later I was taking the Upper Fifth in a morning period when the school porter brought me a cable. At this

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point I should like those who maintain that schoolmasters never have to think to take special note. Before a roomful of twenty boys all pretending to be otherwise engaged but surreptitiously watching my expression to see whether it was good or bad news, I opened the cable. It was from Cannes and read:

J M GOING HOME TO SHOOT P PLEASE PLEASE  
STOP HIM KEEP QUIET WRITING E F

I don't think the Upper Fifth ever determined whether the news was good or bad. I felt too dazed to react at all.

Fortunately the period was nearly over, so I held on to the end. Then I hurried out, sent an express-message for Peter, just to assure myself that he was still unshot, invited him to tea that afternoon, and dashed down the road on my bicycle to inform the Head.

Barely knowing any of the actors in this promising melodrama—he had never met Captain Martinshaw at all—the Head wanted to know what I made of it. I thought the chances were that it was a bit of hysteria on the part of Mrs Felpham, but it was not a matter about which we could take risks. What if the violent J. M. had finally gone off his head—why, incidentally, should he also be at Cannes?—and really intended to score off his maddening ex-wife by slaughtering her son?

We decided that the first thing to do, in self-defence, was to inform the police; and then, simultaneously conjuring up a vision of the diminutive Peter being shadowed in form, at games, and in chapel by an enormous constable, we decided not to inform the police. Hadn't we been asked to keep the thing quiet? We decided instead that I should cable saying that we thought the police should be informed, and await Mrs Felpham's letter. Presumably the would-be assassin could not reach Melbury till the next day at the earliest—it was before the time of regular air services—and in the meanwhile we must arrange our own protection. The Head left that to me; but I was not to divulge the exact situation to anyone, not even to Risborough, my House Assistant.

I told the latter and Wilmyre, my House Captain, merely that a threat to the safety of Martinshaw had come to light. It was probably a hoax, but we could not take chances. Wilmyre was to invoke the help of his four House Monitors, and one of them must be in contact with Martinshaw at every

moment of the day, unless he was actually in form or in my private house. He was to give the House Monitors no reason for this, so that they would probably think, and could be allowed to think, that Martinshaw was suspected of planning to run away. The best thing they could do was to fag the poor boy as much as possible, because then they would know what he was doing. Unfortunately I omitted to tell Wilmyre what to do if the threat to Martinshaw took human shape.

Wilmyre and the House Monitors entered on their duties with terrific enthusiasm and laborious tact. There is nothing a senior public-schoolboy likes so much as a task wherein personal responsibility is combined with a touch of mystery. Peter Martinshaw was fagged with parental benevolence till he was almost worn out. I only secured him for his tea invitation on that first day by going to bail him out myself.

The next day—it was a Wednesday—I received another cable, saying, to our relief, that the police must on no account be informed. The monitorial surveillance went relentlessly on.

On Thursday I had an overwrought and incoherent letter from Mrs Felpham. Only its general purport was clear. Captain Martinshaw had been at Nice and had visited his ex-wife to tell her that Peter must learn boxing; meeting with a refusal, he had thrown one of his most violent transports, ending with a declaration that he was going straight back to England to shoot the poor little something to save him from being messed about any longer by his something something of a mother—some very lurid language was given verbatim by the lady, who was evidently not quite in possession of herself when she wrote.

So there we were. On Friday the persecution of the unfortunate Peter continued. When he came to me almost in tears to complain that he was always being picked on and was doing most of the fagging for the House, I found the complaint hard to meet. The only way I could rescue him from his benevolent oppressors was by putting him to roll my lawn in his leisure moments. He had considered this a privilege in the past, and had to pretend he still did; but it was a poor relaxation. The worst feature of the case was that we might have to go on like this for another six weeks—till the end of the term. After further deliberation with the Head it was

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decided that I must soon write to Mrs Felpham and tell her to take the boy away before he was utterly worn out by our protection; but I should first ask Captain Martinshaw to come down and talk things over, suggesting the next day when, with a little pulling of strings, Peter would be playing in a junior colts' match at another school.

ON that Friday afternoon, however, things began to move. I had bicycled down to Main Field in the town to referee a game of rugby. By this time it had leaked out to other monitors that Peter had to be kept under guard, and most of them, inspired by some very spectacular rumours, were taking a hand as occasion offered. On this afternoon the captain of his game had Peter under observation while he played rugby. When I was approaching my House on the way back, hurrying for a bath and a quick cup of tea before going into form, I became aware of a dull rumbling and thumping, interspersed with occasional high-pitched cries, proceeding from the neighbourhood of my large dormitory. I pedalled round to the boys' entrance to find out what was happening. There was a little crowd of boys round the door, obviously relishing a piquant situation. One of them came to meet me.

'What on earth's going on upstairs?' I asked peevishly.

'We don't know, sir,' the boy replied. 'Wilmyre's up there. He told us to keep away, and to ask you to go up when you got back.'

I went in, up the stone steps, and along the passage outside the large dormitory. The sounds now made it plain that someone was locked in somewhere and demanding angrily to be let out. At the end of the passage outside the Library door Wilmyre was standing, trying to look nonchalant, but evidently both excited and pleased with himself. He came towards me. 'I've got him, sir,' he said in a hoarse whisper.

'Got whom? What's happening?'

'It's a chap after Martinshaw, sir.'

For a moment I wished that I also had a revolver. Then I realised that these high-pitched yelpings could not emanate from the violent Captain. 'Who's in there?' I asked.

'I don't know who he is, sir, but he was after Martinshaw, so I thought he'd obviously better be kept safe.'

The room from which the thumpings and yelpings came was a narrow closet, without a window, between the dormitory and the Library, cut off from the former to make a box-room. I unlocked the door. There emerged, blinking in the sudden light, a little man carrying a brief-case; and I noticed that the trunks and suitcases in the room behind looked as if they had come through an earthquake. The prisoner must have been dapper when he went into custody, but now he was too hot, dusty, and indignant to deserve that epithet. Striped trousers showed below a smart black overcoat, and on his head was a once smart, but now squashed, black hat. Rather a prim little man, I should say, before he became discomposed: now he was spluttering with anger and seemed to be suggesting that if I didn't flog Wilmyre on the spot legal action would indubitably follow.

I made appeasing sounds, took him through the Library to the private side of the House, brushed him down, settled him by a fire in the study, and begged he would excuse me for a few minutes while I changed—by which time tea also would be ready. I was anxious to hear Wilmyre's version of events before the delicate interview which impended. So I sent for him and got him to tell his story, following me round while I hurriedly bathed and dressed.

It appeared that Wilmyre had an off-day from games and was reading in his study, which was close to the boys' entrance, when he heard a strange voice asking for Martinshaw. This was the great moment he had been waiting for; he was out like a flash with all his detective instincts alert. A boy was explaining to a very suspicious-looking man, as he appeared to Wilmyre's wishful eye, how he could find the ground where Martinshaw was playing football. With fine presence of mind but dubious morality Wilmyre assured the sinister stranger that Martinshaw was actually in the House Library. He escorted him upstairs and, standing courteously aside as he opened the door, projected him with extreme dexterity—it must have been—into the dark box-room next to the Library, and rapidly locked the door. He explained with inappropriate relish that his victim must have tripped over a box in his entry, because there were sounds not only of a falling body, but also of numerous cascading trunks and suitcases. I thanked Wilmyre in a somewhat reserved manner for his story, told him to get hold of a monitor to sit in for



my next period, and hurried down to my simmering guest.

UNDER the influence of tea and apologies, which increased in abjectness as the true facts were elicited, the gentleman gradually cooled off. His name was Billings, and he was a partner in the firm of solicitors who dealt with the affairs of Mrs Felpham. Having had a wild and whirling letter from that lady similar to my own, he had thought it best to come down to Melbury to investigate the situation. My wife had told him that I was out and would not be back till 4 o'clock or so; and he thought he might fill the interval by interviewing Peter. What fate he suffered at the hands of 'a lout of a boy' I already knew too well.

I found Mr Billings, with his aplomb fully restored, a human and efficient little man, and I was very glad of the opportunity of sharing my problem with him. When we had fully discussed the situation, he asked whether he could use my telephone. 'I think, Mr Barnes,' he said, 'it would be as well to find out whether Captain Martinshaw has actually got back to England. I quite understand that you don't want the police taking a hand down here, but there is no reason why they should not intervene at his end.'

'Mrs Felpham did ask me not to inform the police.'

'I will take full responsibility for that, Mr Barnes.'

A call to the Captain's home showed that he had not yet come back from France, though he was expected some time at the week-end. He might be spending a night at his club on the way through London.

'I'll get the police to make inquiries there as well,' said Mr Billings. 'They may at least be able to discover if he has gone permanently off his head.'

I summoned Wilmyre at the end of the first period, told him that it was all a misunderstanding, and sent him into the study to make his peace with Mr Billings. When he came out he was a little moist about the eyes. 'I'm terribly sorry, sir,' he said as he passed me outside.

'That's all right, Jim. You showed great initiative and presence of mind, only things worked out wrong. It was bad luck.'

'He gave me ten bob, sir. It was jolly awkward—after the way I pushed him about.'

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'That was nice of him. But you certainly earned it.'

I found Mr Billings blowing his nose and snuffling slightly. 'Good boy that,' he said. 'Should turn out well.' And yet Englishmen are reputed to be unemotional!

ON Mr Billings's advice I maintained our guard till we could make contact with the Captain. The next day was Saturday, when Peter was duly selected to play for the junior colts at another school, and his warders could relax for the afternoon. Captain Martinshaw did not turn up. On Sunday morning after chapel I had to go to the Head to report the Billings affair and talk about some other matter. Risborough had nobly offered to take Martinshaw and two other boys out for a picnic lunch and a walk, so that most of the day was safely accounted for.

Just before tea Risborough came to see me. 'Martinshaw hasn't reported yet, I suppose?' he said.

'Reported? Where from? Didn't you bring him back?'

'I was going to tell you. Just before we were due to start he got leave from me to go out for lunch, as he couldn't find you. His father came down unexpectedly. I knew you'd be glad to have him in safe hands for the day.'

On the verge of an explosion, I remembered that Risborough hadn't been told anything about Peter's father, and I felt horribly guilty. I had known at the time that it was carrying discretion too far, but the Head was firm about it. 'Where did they go?' I asked with laboured nonchalance.

'I don't know. The Captain brought his car and took the boy off in it.'

I rang up the Head, who was extremely annoyed with the blameless Risborough, and a restless evening followed. Unless special leave was granted, boys going out on a Sunday had to be back for supper at 7. At 7.30 there was no sign of the Martinshaws, and with the Head's approval I rang up the police. The Station Sergeant, who could not understand from my vague and reticent statement of the case what on earth I was worrying about, said he had better come up and see me.

A difficult interview followed. Without disclosing the full reasons for anxiety I tried to persuade the Sergeant that it was time the police took steps to find out where the boy

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was. 'I don't understand why you're so worried, sir,' he said. 'Any trifling mishap to the car might have stopped them coming back at the right time.' The Sergeant, supplied with a glass of beer, was bent on turning this into a social evening.

'Why hasn't the father rung up if that was all?'

'Oh, well, sir, some gentlemen aren't too considerate. I don't think you've any cause to bother, sir.'

Then it had to come out. 'Well, I have cause to bother. You see, the father had said he was coming down to shoot his son.'

Then the Sergeant sat up and became interested. 'You might have mentioned that before, sir.'

'I was particularly asked by the boy's mother not to inform the police.'

The Sergeant was beginning to expatiate on the unfairness of enlisting the help of the police without telling them all the facts, when there were footsteps outside and a knock at the door. I got up to open it. Outside were Peter Martinshaw and his father. Peter said rather sheepishly: 'It's my father, sir,' and the Captain began: 'I don't know what you'll think of me, Barnes—' but I hustled them along to the dining-room—the only place available, as my wife was entertaining boys in the drawing-room—and went back to get rid of the Sergeant. I managed with difficulty to dissuade him from interviewing the would-be murderer there and then.

WHEN the Captain's apologies were over—they had only run out of petrol—and I had got rid of Peter, I prepared for my *scène à faire*. Captain Martinshaw was dark and very good-looking, a dashing cavalry

officer of the old style, at the moment overflowing with his irresistible charm and not noticeably mad. He talked with perfect naturalness about the boy and wanted to know how he was getting on. He was obviously very fond of Peter. After a little I thought it was time we came down to hard facts. 'So you didn't carry out your threat,' I said abruptly.

'My threat?' He looked genuinely puzzled.

'I understand that you were intending to shoot Peter.'

He laughed easily. 'Oh, that! Just a little breeze. One says these things, you know. Never thought of it again till you mentioned it. To tell you the truth, I was a bit exasperated. That boy's mother is doing her very best to ruin him, in my opinion.'

When I explained some of the consequences of his casual quip he became disarmingly apologetic. The strain relaxed, and we ended by having an amicable drink. As he was about to go, he said: 'Oh, by the way, I want Peter to learn boxing. Can you see about it?'

'I understand from his mother that she doesn't wish it,' I said.

'You needn't bother about that. The boy is determined on it.'

'But look here,' I said, 'I have to go by his mother's wishes.'

'This *is* her wish,' he replied. 'There was a little trouble about it at first. But I told her I wasn't going to pay public-school fees for Peter if he couldn't have the full benefits. When I said I should take him away and send him to a day-school if he couldn't learn boxing, she agreed at once. She's quite reasonable about things if you talk to her sensibly.'

With this parting hint on the value of being sensible the dashing Captain took his leave.

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## Hippopotamus

*I am a hippopotamus,  
I love to doze and lie  
In river deep and make no fuss  
As men in noisy boats go by.*

*Deep in the mud I squelch and roll,  
So cool and soft and nice to feel,  
I burrow in it like a mole  
Till shadows round me softly steal.*

*Yes, I'm a hippopotamus,  
As you would see if you were here,  
I am a happy-potamus—  
You're happy too, I hope, what cheer!*

H. R. DAFFIN.

# Red Menace Over Africa

## *Tackling the Red Locust at Birth*

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GREGORY WOOD

WHEN the people of Africa—white farmers in Kenya, tribal chiefs in the Congo, overlords in Ethiopia, and government officials of a score of states and colonies—talk about the red menace it is fairly certain that they are not concerned with politics. The danger which is constantly in their minds is as old as history—the red locust.

During 1951-52 there were all the signs of a major attack. That it did not bring starvation and desolation to areas fifty times the size of the British Isles was due to the wonderful work of several organisations, mostly British-controlled. The men who have the best knowledge of this dangerous insect are members of the Anti-Locust Research Centre, situated, curiously enough, in London. Few people travelling through West London by bus or wandering around the fossils and stuffed animals of the Natural History Museum in South Kensington realise that on the top floor of that building locusts are bred in vast numbers. And, if some of these insects escaped and began to strip the trees around the Brompton Road, Londoners would not recognise them. The red locust looks like a large grasshopper. It may measure 3 inches. Individually, it is not very frightening, but its danger is its prolific breeding propensities, plus the uncanny intelligence the mass shows in outwitting obstacles.

Most people have seen photographs of a locust cloud, many have seen films of stripped trees and fields, but only by personal experience can locust devastation be really appreciated. The insects fly so closely together that the average weight of a swarm is one ton per acre. A normal cloud will extend over 5 square miles. The really big ones may extend to 100 square miles. The swarms inevitably descend to feed, and, as a cloud of the largest

kind is estimated to weigh some 60,000 tons, it will eat just that amount of vegetation, for the red locust needs its own weight in food every day. Even before the war, locust damage in a quiet year was estimated, according to information provided by some forty-nine countries, to reach £10 million.

KNOWLEDGE of the breeding habits of the red locust is fairly recent. In the 1930's it was realised that, though the direction the swarms took might vary greatly, the outbreak area was the same. A British explorer, A. P. G. Michelmore, set up a base in Northern Rhodesia and began journeys over a huge part of Central Africa. He met an intelligent native chieftainess named Mwene Maria, who told him that her tribe could always find locusts to eat in the Rukwa Valley near by. It was in lonely, difficult country between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Nyasa. Though another breeding-area has been discovered near Lake Mweru to the west, Rukwa is undoubtedly the main birthplace of Africa's red menace. In itself, Rukwa is quite small, but the evil which spreads outwardly from here has at times successfully invaded 3,000,000 square miles.

My own visit to the region, which on one side is bounded by Lake Rukwa and elsewhere is surrounded by forest, was in the dry season. At that time it is a beautiful place. The general terrain is quite high—some 2500 feet—and there are great plains of grass, interspersed with rivers which do not dry up except in severe drought. At such a time the casual visitor might well regard this series of shallow valleys which extend in two areas over some 4000 square miles as a slice of paradise. The perfection is only temporary. In the rainy

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season the whole area becomes quite impossible—a vast flooded zone where nature riots as soon as the water drains off the steaming ground sufficiently for plant-growth to begin.

Because of this flooding, man has hitherto left the Rukwa Valley alone. There are no domesticated cattle, no native villages, no crops. Africa's wild life has discovered the freedom from human danger and swarmed into the area. Buffalo and antelope move regularly through it. Elephant herds come for the grass. Hippopotamus are among the animals who can live there all the year round. Lions find it a source of inexhaustible prey.

Strangely enough, the locusts which live the early stages of their life here do not destroy all vegetation as they do further afield. Some instinct causes them to leave their birthplace in reasonable shape for succeeding generations. Locusts always exist in the Rukwa Valley. It is only through some unknown combination of circumstances that now and then their numbers increase to a fantastic degree and they then form into migratory swarms as they did last year. To ascertain the reasons for these periodic increases will take years of painstaking research. Meantime the area offers a certain method of combating even the likelihood of a locust plague.

THE job is difficult. Breeding occurs during the wet season, when it would have been considered impossible for man or his machines to get into the area. In the season before I was there natives had been brought considerable distances, housed, fed, and trained to kill the hoppers, as the insects are called during the five preliminary stages of their life before the winged adults emerge. The natives worked valiantly to destroy an evil which is part of their folklore. They dug miles of trenches to drain away water so that other squads could get to the infested grass and beat it. Arsenic powder was scattered by swinging petrol-tins in which holes had been pierced. Stirrup-pumps from Britain's A.R.P. stores were used to squirt insecticide on tall grass and tree foliage. As soon as it was dry enough, the long grass was burned.

Such manual methods, even with armies of natives, could never cover all the breeding-centres of the Rukwa Valley. The possibility of aircraft-spraying was investigated, but it was found that while this is effective once the adults are on the wing the machine moves too

fast to be lethal in the crevices where the hoppers hide.

In Bristol, experts of the famous agricultural research station at Long Ashton examined the problem and produced a special ground machine with a powerful spray. Used when there is a wind, the machine throws a poisonous mist over a huge area, covering 3 to 5 acres a minute and breaking up the liquid so finely that only a gallon is used per acre. To enable the machine to move through waterlogged terrain there are tractors fitted with half-tracks. The poison used is dinitro-orthocresol. It kills by its fumes.

ANYONE who has seen the Rukwa Valley, even in the dry season, must query whether chemical methods can really ever be 100 per cent effective. The gallant group of men who are waging this lonely war realise the odds against them, and are increasingly hopeful that Nature herself may be turned into an ally. Locust-eating birds exact a great toll on the swarms, but when there are billions of insects they make little effect on the mass. Moreover, the birds do not appear in flocks until the swarm is actually on the move. The possibility of bringing such birds into the Rukwa Valley has been considered.

A more useful field of research is into the question of locust disease. In 1934 huge numbers of hoppers were found dying. The trouble was traced to a fungus, and there may be other parasites and forms of virus which will prove fatal. Unfortunately a bacteria which successfully attacked grasshoppers in America has proved ineffective against their African cousin, the red locust. This part of the battle is only just beginning.

One engineer whom I met was convinced that a complete change in the geographical and natural details of the Rukwa Valley would in the long run be the cheapest and most effective plan. Thick woods are not liked by the egg-laying locusts, and by creating scattered islands of trees on high ground the main grass breeding-zone would be broken up. Extensive channelling would keep the flood-waters moving and prevent large areas from being inundated. A big irrigation scheme would not only destroy the waterlogged areas which the locusts need for breeding, but would enable agriculture to move into the Rukwa as well. To control the streams and rivers which run into Lake Rukwa, however, would need



dams, canals, and ditches in an area almost the size of England—a formidable task and an expensive one.

Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the locusts destroy food and other raw materials worth £10 million every year. In terms of human welfare the figure is much larger than this, for £10 million compensation will not buy food that does not exist. At present a mere £100,000 a year is being spent in combating the locust at birth.

Politically, the fight against the locust by the Western nations is worth almost anything that is spent. In the spring of 1951 one of the worst locust plagues in living memory

moved from East Africa northwards. Israel, struggling to feed its huge population, was attacked. Persia, its economy rocked by the oil troubles, saw famine on the wings of the swarm moving from Jordan and Iraq. The hungry millions of Pakistan watched the clouds of insects. The United States and Great Britain threw in men and materials worth more than £1 million. The Middle Eastern peoples saw the goodwill of the West in a practical form. Russia, too, co-operated. Soviet aircraft, as well as American machines, sprayed Persian fields. Against the last major natural enemy of man unity among the nations has been proved possible.

## Celestine

### *A Rare and Important Mineral*

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T. A. RYDER

THE great development of the beet-sugar industry in Great Britain in recent years has been made possible, to a very large extent, by the exploitation of a mineral of such rarity that it is found in workable quantities only in one other place in the world. That mineral is celestine, the sulphate of strontium.

Those who have had occasion to travel through the Yate district of Gloucestershire may have noticed beside the roads heaps of red-streaked whitish stonelike pieces. Most of the travellers have probably dismissed the pieces as just stones, but they are far from being that. A closer inspection would have shown that the 'stones' are made up of compacted crystals, whitish, or sometimes slightly bluish, in colour. Some of the crystals may be clear and colourless and formed into almost perfect prisms. The red streaking is only superficial; it is not part of the crystals but merely particles of the red marls from which the crystals were dug—the marls that form the rocks round about.

The crystals are those of celestine. Now, strontium is a rather valuable and important substance, but it does not occur in many places in the world, at least in large enough quantities to make its winning a commercial proposition. Only at Yate, so far as Britain is concerned, is it worth digging for. Small amounts have been found in certain places in Scotland, but nothing really worthwhile. There are deposits in Sicily, in the volcanic rocks there, and small amounts have been discovered on an island in the Canadian part of Lake Erie and in Pennsylvania.

Before the late war—and we have no reliable figures for the years during and since—the average annual production of strontium in the world was only seven thousand tons, and of that amount ninety-five per cent came from Yate. Yet very few people know of Yate—except that there was an aircraft factory there during the war—and even fewer know of the rare mineral that is obtained from the fields there.

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THE method of working the celestine at Yate is rather interesting. The mineral occurs in pockets and veins in the red marls that cover the district. The workings are just holes in the fields. It might be termed open-cast working. The marls belong to what geologists call the Triassic System, or the New Red Sandstone, to give it the older name. When these rocks were laid down, some two hundred million years ago, the climate of Britain was then tropical; much of the area was desert, but there were some very salt seas or lakes. In fact, the British area must have been rather like that around the Dead Sea to-day. The celestine was deposited from solution on the floor of one of these lakes, amongst the marly material that was collecting there. But the deposition was not uniform and layered, so that the mineral is not found in seams, as coal is. This irregular method of deposition makes it rather difficult to work the deposits, for one cannot tell exactly where to go next when one pocket has been worked out. Luckily, the celestine does not lie far beneath the surface of the ground, so that hit-or-miss borings or diggings do not prove too expensive. In Sicily, by the way, the celestine was formed differently—namely, as a result of volcanic activity. Happily there is no unsightly surface left after a pocket of the mineral has been worked out, for the resultant hole is fairly shallow and can easily be filled in and the land can be quickly restored to agriculture. No overhead gear is needed either, so that the workings are not obvious at a distance. There are no waste-heaps, as in coal-mining, wherefore celestine-mining would seem to be an ideal country industry.

THOSE who remember their chemistry will know that different chemical elements give different colours when burned, many of them having characteristic flame coloration. Strontium gives a bright-red colour. That is why one of the uses for the mineral is in the making of signal flares and fireworks. The strontium salt is mixed with other chemicals that will burn with production of heat sufficient to ignite the strontium, the result

being a bright-red burst of colour. No other substance will produce quite the same bright scarlet that is so useful for warning purposes.

But the most important use of celestine is in sugar-refining. If it were not for the Yate deposits it is doubtful whether we in this country would be able to produce the beet-sugar that forms so large a part of our supply. There was a time when no less than 95 per cent of the sugar used in Britain was imported, either as cane-sugar from the West Indies or as beet-sugar from Germany, but during and since the war much of the sugar used in this country was and continues to be produced at home. The sugar-beet is grown on farms in many parts of the country, but mainly in the Fen District. The great processing factories are situated there too. The beet is pulped and processed to form molasses; celestine is then added, with the result that a disaccharate is formed. That is strained off and treated with carbon dioxide, and the result is beet-sugar.

Before the war we exported many tons of celestine to Germany to be used in the refineries there, but to-day the mineral is used at home. It is also used, to a smaller extent, in other industrial processes—in the production of certain paints, for example, as a filler in rubber, in the desulphurising of steel, and, quite recently, in the making of certain plastics.

At the moment, there seems to be little difficulty in maintaining the annual output of some five to six thousand tons—half-a-million tons have been won in the last seventy years—but no one knows for how long that rate can be kept up. In any case, the area of the outcrop of the Trias marls is limited in extent, so far as the Yate district is concerned, and the area of outcrop has been somewhat reduced in recent years by building, both of houses and of factories, for Yate is a developing district. Luckily, some allowance has been made in the County Development plan for the need to continue working, for if, and when, the Yate deposits are worked out, then we might have to import yet another vital raw material, because, so far as is known, there are no other large deposits of the mineral in the British Isles.



## Neighbours of the Redwood Ridge

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H. MORTIMER BATTEN

'I RECKON you 're making a mistake, Mac, letting them big owls nest in the basswood alongside the barn,' observed Stephen, who, as usual, had happened along from the sawmill to spend Sunday at Mac's cabin. 'When their chicks are hatched, they 'll lift every fowl you 've got.'

The big Scotsman tossed another log into the red-hot stove and slammed its iron door with a gesture of decision. 'That's where you 're wrong, Steph,' he announced. 'Such birds as them don't kill where they 're nesting. It's agin the policy of their kind, and I'd rather have them there than on the Redwood Ridge, a mile away, where they usually nest. They prefer to keep the peace at their own thresholds.'

The man from the sawmill grunted doubtfully. 'Theory!' said he. 'But have it your own way, Mac. Ever since you came here you 've gumbled about the great horned owls lifting your poultry, and now you 're letting them nest next door to the hens. If that isn't asking for it, I don't know what is.'

'Wait and see,' mumbled Mac. 'It's just a little experiment of mine, and I don't mind betting you they not only leave the hens alone,

but also stop other owls hunting hereabouts. There 's no bird more jealous of its home range than an owl.'

Steph had evidence of this a little while later, but meantime, while the two men talked, the owls in question were in a great state of excitement. As the frosty sunset filled the southern sky with fire both great birds clung to the rough bark of their home-tree, peering down through their nesting-hole into the dark interior. There two balls of snowy fluff which had just broken from the round white eggs were feebly jostling each other, crying the while, though human ears could hardly have detected their voices. Scarcely able to believe this miracle of their own attainment, their parents gurgled and cracked their hooked beaks, staring into each other's wild yellow eyes, while their feathers rose and fell and they hopped excitedly from one leg to the other.

In the midst of this ecstatic scene the door of Mac's cabin opened, for the time was drawing near for Steph to take his shift at the sawmill. A ray of white light shot across the frozen snow—frost would prevail for another eight weeks ere the caress of spring reached

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the northland—and it seemed to the owls that the men were aggressively noisy over their parting. The male bird, smaller and a good deal older than his mate, flew at once to his look-out perch on the topmost twig of the tall tamarack across the clearing, and from this vantage-point he watched Steph leave the cabin. He lowered his head and stared more savagely as the man approached their nesting-tree, but he would not have done what he saw his mate do, not unless the man had tried to climb to their nesting-place. All the same he was prepared and ready to back his mate as she made her stoop, which was just when Steph was opposite the door of the barn.

Steph sensed rather than saw the great grey shape descending upon him from the trees. Momentarily he had forgotten the owls, but now he instinctively struck upwards with his stick, and the blow was well timed. The stick went home on bone and feathers, and, checked in her stoop, the owl recovered within arm's reach, sweeping across the snow with a cry which resembled the angry growling of a dog.

Steph lost no time in quitting the place. He went back to Mac and warned him of the terrible peril of those armed and armoured feet descending from the darkness. But Mac only grunted. Stubborn and non-committal as most of his race, thought Steph. At all events it seemed to him that the great horned owls were far from being desirable neighbours for any woodsman. 'Likely customers for Mac to pin his faith upon,' he thought aloud.

TO the owls it was little more than a passing incident, for they were the king birds of those vast woods, and had no enemies other than man. When Steph was finally gone, Ghost Wings, the male bird, sat for a time murmuring over the situation as the last streak of day faded behind him. This was his hunting-hour, but it was customary for him to watch and listen for a spell before setting out, and one way and another there was plenty for him to think about. The cold of late had been intense, and though he and his mate had only themselves to feed, there had been none too much for them. Now the call on him would be more than doubled, for he would have to carry for his mate while she sheltered the chicks, in addition to meeting his own needs. He was prepared to go

hungry, but he was experienced enough to realise that it would be false economy to starve himself to the weakening point when others were dependent upon him. The two were mated for life, or at least for so long as fate permitted them to remain together, as he and his previous mate had remained together till he lost her.

As he sat there, overlooking many miles of rolling forest in which deep valleys and wide lakes were hidden, he heard the hunting-cry of his neighbours on the Redwood Ridge a mile away—rather he heard the hunger-bark of the male bird, who had been carrying for their chicks over a week now. It stirred him to the realisation that he must get moving, for the cry told him that there was not much to be done locally with the temperature still falling, and to-night he must carry home a festive meal of some kind. He knew where such a meal could be obtained if one made the long journey and faced the risks, and that first glimpse of his chicks had left him in a mood which discounted distance and danger. So away he sailed over the frost-spangled treetops, rising steadily into the silken clearness of the night, where the cold and the silence were one. He passed over high ridges and crossed wide expanses of unbroken whiteness, which were the great lakes under their mantle of snow. His broad wings fanned slowly and silently, giving no indication of his speed, and there, from a thousand feet up, the wintry world below was utterly lifeless. For nearly an hour he flew, then, reaching the end of the long chain of lakes, he began to plane downwards.

Here the eternity of forest gave way to rows of wooden buildings with lighted windows. There were straight avenues of light where men moved and created strange noises, and far away a stream of fire indicated the northward-journeying train making for the railhead. But these were but a few threads across the infinite; still the prevailing world was of treetops away into immeasurable distance. Ghost Wings passed over the settlement to the open country beyond, where snake-fences separated one man's property from the next. There were still lights dotted here and there, and close to one of them he alighted on the roof of a barn.

For a long time he remained there, watching and listening, till his keen hearing had told him almost, but not quite, everything. He rose and twice encircled the barn on noiseless



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wings, then he flew in at an open window, but almost instantly wafted out again.

He now knew all that he needed to know. There was still a light at the farmhouse window, but inside the barn the cows were lying down and the watchdog was asleep on a truss of straw behind them. The fowls were roosting in a row along the beams above, and a black-and-ginger cat was nursing her kits among the hayseeds in a corner.

Once more Ghost Wings flew round, then suddenly he pitched through the window again as though really intent on business this time. No thief on earth could have been more silent, and the old rooster never knew in what shape death came to him. Those terrible claws crushed out his life in the twinkling of an eye, and simultaneously the hooked beak severed his head from his body, leaving it lying on the floor of the barn, certain evidence of a great horned owl. He was gone with his prize in a moment, uttering a cry of triumph, like beating dry bones together, but there followed the outraged barking of a dog and the flutter and cackle of fowls disturbed from their roosting-place.

By the time the door of the farmhouse opened, Ghost Wings was sailing higher and higher over the settlement, the train had come to rest at the depot, but he had left behind him for registration another proof against his kind. And all this he could have done within a few yards of his own home-tree, save that, as a wise old Scotsman had pointed out, it was again the policy of his kind to kill at their own thresholds.

**D**URING the days that followed, Ghost Wings was hard put to it to supply the family needs, and within a week he was nearing the danger-point of weakness. The wood-hares at this season, living on the bark of trees, were so poorly nourished that a bird of prey might starve in the midst of them, the muskrats and beavers were under the ice, the mice millions deeply buried, so that others who hunted were similarly starving. Ghost Wings was now too weak to carry many miles, as he did on the night we were last with him. It is not uncommon for these early-nesting owls, the kings of their kind, to be found with wings outstretched on the snow, displaying their wonderful symmetry, and Ghost Wings was nearing this point of exhaustion. It was the carrying which got him, for, true to his

kind, he was faithful in his toils. Could he have fed where he killed, things would have gone better with him, but it was the carrying, lifting, carrying.

Then came the night when, arriving home with a rank, musk-tainted mink, which had fought like a fiend, he was just in time to see another owl swoop hastily from the open door of Mac's barn, carrying something heavy in its claws. His momentary conclusion was that it would be his mate, and by the time he realised that it was one of their neighbours from the Redwood Ridge the other owl had obtained a good lead. Mad with fury, Ghost Wings shrieked to his mate, and as she emerged from the nesting-hole he dropped the mink for her, and set off in hot pursuit of the trespasser. That it might be his own son made no difference in the unforgivable charge based on the law of territorial rights, and not only was the other owl heavily laden, but his conscience was against him.

The bird must have been hard-pressed by hunger to kill within sight of his neighbours' home-tree, and he must have known, moreover, that he did so at peril of his life. Ghost Wings, with right on his side and with fury speeding his unladen wings, quickly cut down the lead, and at the foot of the Ridge he stooped to kill.

But the great birds of prey are ever reluctant to close with each other, knowing that in most cases it means death or disablement for one, and in some cases death for both. Their claws are terrible stabbing-weapons, penetrating to the vitals, and so the raider let fall his prize as he swerved to avoid the death-stoop of Ghost Wings.

In the circumstances that was the only gesture he was able to make, and Ghost Wings, himself a victim to their common foe, accepted it as a gesture. He sped to take possession of the prize, a decapitated fowl, stolen from his threshold, but withal the property of Mac, if the law of possession can be said to hold in times of hunger.

Ghost Wings had already left food for his mate and chicks, and so for once could consider his own ravenous hunger. Instantly he began to tear the fowl to bits, swallowing great chunks of it complete with feathers, and the sight of his feasting was too much for the other starving bird, who had alighted near to watch. He came wafting cautiously down, only his hunger remaining, a younger and smaller bird than Ghost Wings, who now

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ignored him as he fed. Remnants of the fowl lay littered about, and tentatively, almost apologetically, the bird whose kill it rightly was reached for a morsel. Still Ghost Wings ignored him, and soon both of them were feeding side by side, till Ghost Wings glided off, taking, alas, a part of the meal with him. But it was mainly skin and feathers, and, satisfied at last, Ghost Wings let it fall at the foot of their home-tree, where Mac found it next morning—more evidence for their deadliest enemy, man! Small wonder the great horned owl must ever retreat before man's advance into the wilderness, for in these ways they betray themselves.

**E**ARLY next forenoon the Scotsman arrived at the sawmill in search of Steph, who greeted him quizzically as to the conduct of his pet owls. Somewhat shamefacedly Mac admitted that he had come for the loan of Steph's shotgun, at which Steph was too much of a gentleman to crow: 'I told you so!' Instead, he partly changed the subject, pointing out that it would be a shame to shoot those fine birds, since parents and chicks would be worth quite a tidy sum if taken alive. 'They'll be queer varmints to handle,' he admitted, 'but why not big business while we're at it? I've got a good fish-net we could fix. You get back home and knock a cage together, then I'll be along this afternoon.'

So Mac, ever alive to the main chance, went home and made the cage. He found some wire-netting, but his box was none too sound and he had no staples, so that it was not a particularly tidy job when finished. By the time Steph arrived, however, everything was ready, even to a chunk of venison hung inside the cage for the owls to feed on.

The net, made by Minwell, the Cree hunter, was of fine silk, as efficient as a spider's web and proportionately as strong and transparent. Both men concluded that the hen bird would be in the hollow tree with her chicks, and as the entrance-hole was almost within arm's reach it was a simple matter to fix the net between two trimmed cedar poles. Now, each carrying a pole with the net between them like a banner, they cautiously approached the basswood and silently laid the net over the entrance. Then they shouted and smote the trunk, at which the hen bird flew out, straight into the net, of course, instantly to become entangled, her great wings flapping

wildly. Bringing the poles together with the owl enveloped, they laid her on the snow, and, each firmly holding a wing-tip, they kept her extended till her terrible claws were free of the netting. The fierce bird fought like a wild-cat, but, working cautiously and keeping their eyes open lest her mate should appear, they carried her, hissing and striking, into the shed, and soon the door of the cage was closed upon her.

So far so good. They went back with the net and erected it as before over the entrance-hole. At the fall of darkness the hen bird's mate would be sure to appear and fly into the net, to become entangled as the hen bird herself had been. As they returned to the cabin, indeed, they saw him fly to the tall tamarack and sit there motionless on his sundown vigil. With him in the bag it would be time enough to lift the chicks to-morrow, but for a long time after dusk had gathered they sat by the stove listening to the silence. Bess, Mac's dog, listened with them, but the male bird must have gone off on his hunting, so at length the time came for Steph to return to the sawmill. But he went the opposite way round the cabin, holding his stick ready, and still conjuring up pictures of the mother of the chicks when they carried her fighting over to the barn.

Mac sat up till he wearied of it, then he took Bess over to the barn, leaving the top half of the door open as the only ventilation. He crept into his bunk but left his lamp burning, and it was still burning when he awoke at daybreak.

**A**T about midnight Ghost Wings had returned to the basswood, after a spell of hard hunting, which had produced only a miserable little red weasel, the best he could do. He alighted high up in the tree, but there was neither sign nor sound of his mate, so, being habitually silent about the home, he flew down to the entrance-hole, and saw the net shimmering in the moonlight. As an old bird with some experience of settled country, he was at once suspicious of a trap, and after hovering he clung cautiously to the ice-coated bark and peered in. But his mate was not there, and, thoroughly disturbed and ruffled, he flew across to his tall tamarack, and for a time he uttered a series of long-drawn sighs. Human ears would hardly have detected the sound fifty feet away, but his mate would have

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heard him a mile off. Between each sigh he listened, and presently she answered him, then for a minute they conversed back and forth in this strange way. Leaving their intended supper in a fork of the tamarack, Ghost Wings wafted back to Mac's clearing.

The light at the window bade him be cautious, but soon he flew into the barn, where he found his mate clinging with bleeding claws to the wire-netting of her cage. She was half-mad with terror, and, seeing him, began to struggle so desperately that she disturbed Bess, sleeping on guard by the warm cow a few yards away. Bess at once flew at the male owl perched on top of the box, but she was met by such a cyclone of fury that she leapt out into the night, lucky to escape with her sight.

Though the hen bird had struggled for hours, breaking her splendid wing and tail feather, she was too cramped inside the cage to get proper perches for her feet and wings. But from the outside Ghost Wings could work more freely. He could wrench at the wire with his claws, adding the strength of his wings, and normally he could have lifted a fox. In his extremity he attacked the wire with all his might, and even Mac had no idea when he made the cage of the strength of the creatures it was meant to hold. So within a few minutes the netting began to gape from the woodwork at one corner, and it was the hen bird's turn to help herself. She thrust her head through the gap, glad to breathe free air, then pushed and wedged till her shoulder followed. Another minute and she was free, and both of them went fanning off across the night, never more to return to that dreadful place.

One is inclined to think that it was Ghost Wings who did most of the planning thereafter, and Ghost Wings who acted. His mate was too flustered and horrified and bedraggled, but act they must with that deadly net still between them and their chicks. It was some

fiendish instrument of their arch-enemy man, and they knew themselves dead up against man himself, which meant death for themselves and their chicks, or something inconceivably worse.

Cunningly and cautiously the great owls cut the net strand by strand till it sagged away from their entrance-hole. Those deadly feet of theirs must have been capable of infinite gentleness, since they dared to close them upon their tender chicks and to carry them off over the treetops in the direction of the Redwood Ridge. The owls are strange creatures, jealous yet clannish, and the darkness prevents one coming to know them as we know the birds of the day. It was Minwell, the Cree hunter, who later declared that two pairs of the big owls were feeding chicks in the high nesting-hole in the redwood which owls had occupied since his boyhood.

WHEN Steph turned up next morning, Mac was grinning, while Bess stood beside him with a plaster over her nose. 'They've beaten us, Steph,' Mac announced. 'She's escaped, and, what's more, they've ripped your net to bits and carried away their chicks.'

Stephen stared. 'How do you know they have?' he demanded. 'Looked in at the hole,' Mac told him. 'It's empty. If you don't believe me, go and look for yourself.'

'Not on your life!' replied Stephen, instinctively clapping his hands over his ears.

Mac's grin widened. 'My cage wasn't good enough,' he admitted, 'but personally I don't hold with cages. Anyway, it's not of much consequence. Only a few dollars we'd be better earning in some other way than by sending them poor critters from these woods to live for ever in cages. I myself would regret it only once—' he added, his eyes sweeping the blue horizon, 'yes, only once, but that would be for all time.'

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## Rust

*They broke up the old 'Ruanda'*

*That I'd sailed to the world's last shore;  
And the things I found precious to dream of  
Swelled the rust of a chandler's store.*

*They broke up the old 'Ruanda';*

*And they'll break me as well one day;  
But the dreams of a man are eternal,  
And the rust shall not steal them away.*

CHARLES KELLIE.

# More Regimental Mascots

Major T. J. EDWARDS, M.B.E., F.R.Hist.S.

DONALD the deer was bred in the Scottish Highlands, so that when he went to Dublin in 1838 as the mascot\* of The Black Watch he did not take kindly to any blarney or annoyance from Irishmen. One day, when the regiment furnished the Castle guard, the men marched through the streets of Dublin with Donald in the place of honour at their head, quite free, for he never wore harness. Some roughs threw stones at him, apparently to make him stampede, but when Donald charged them they scattered in all directions seeking cover. By some uncanny sense he picked out the ringleader and pursued him until he went to ground in a shop. After this Donald was accorded much respect by the populace.

The Black Watch shared the barracks with The Royal Scots Greys, and Donald was given a home in their stables and a daily feed of oats. In 1839, however, The Greys left and were succeeded by The Bays, who were not so indulgent towards him as had been the former regiment. The deer resented this and would chase any of The Bays that crossed his path, which inspired a clever sketch by an officer of The Black Watch, entitled 'Stag at Bay,' depicting Donald pinning one of The Bays against the wall.

Donald accompanied his regiment everywhere, on field-days, route-marches, or guard duties, and always kept his place by the Sergeant-Major, unless annoyed. But after a few years he began to fall from grace, because the Highlanders gave him sherry and whisky, which made him bad-tempered, and he became particularly dangerous to strangers. It was therefore arranged that he should end his days in the park of Bandon Castle, but even here he was so uncontrollable that after two years

he had to be shot. As so often happened, the men, through mistaken good-nature, spoiled their pet by giving it strong drink and thereby brought about its untimely end.

A LION is a useful mascot to have on hand when querulous Inspecting General Officers are busy; a hungry glance from Leo would almost certainly ensure a quick termination of their activities. Probably the only lion mascot of the British Army was Poilu of the 19th Division during the Great War of 1914-18. The late General Sir Tom Bridges, the Divisional Commander, obtained him in the spring of 1916, and he would follow the General everywhere. He was quite free and was never on a leash. Although Poilu was popular with the troops, his presence in the trenches was frowned upon by certain members of the hierarchy. The local population was most apprehensive about him, and when it was rumoured that he was in the vicinity they would snatch up their children and lock them indoors. If they could not reach home, they shinned up the nearest trees. Kitchens and meat-stores received more than a passing glance from the young lion, and the hearts of master cooks began to beat with normal regularity only after he had passed and was well away.

When General Bridges's headquarters were in dugouts in Scherpenberg Hill, a prominent position from which an extensive view of the line could be obtained, many V.I.P.s would call on him to watch shells bursting in the area. One day a Cabinet Minister of great consequence called and, after some refreshment, entered the trench leading to an observation post. Within a few minutes he rushed back helter-skelter into the headquarters, panting for breath. Restoratives were applied, and when his speech became coherent he remarked,

\* An earlier article by Major Edwards on regimental mascots appeared in *Chambers's Journal* for November 1949.



## MORE REGIMENTAL MASCOTS

somewhat surprised: 'I may be wrong, but did I see a lion in the path?' Although he was assured that he had not been seeing things as the result of a generous lunch, his temper remained ruffled and he left without viewing the landscape.

Whatever entertainment the Divisional Staff enjoyed at the expense of this leading statesman, it was the beginning of the end of Poilu's life in the Army. General Bridges had received many hints that it would be better if young Leo were sent to the base, to which he always replied: 'Come and take him,' but no one availed themselves of this offer. However, in September 1917 the General was wounded and Poilu was despatched to England in the care of his A.D.C., spending the rest of his days in Mr (now Sir) Hugh Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake's private zoo near Maidstone. 'Always the perfect gentleman,' wrote Bridges in his memoirs, 'he contrived to die aged nineteen, on the 19th June 1935, the mascot of the 19th Division.'

The 17th Lancers had, at different periods, three bears as their mascots. Teddy, the second in succession, was obtained in 1908 while the regiment was stationed in India. He was a great pet with the troops, until he learned how to open boxes and kit-bags. When left alone he would open as many as possible, and scatter the contents about the barracks, a habit which made him unpopular with the victims of this sport and led to his being chained at a safe distance from possible trouble. His temper was very mild until he saw some parrots in a cage. In an instant he had the cage open and devoured the birds. This was his undoing, for from that moment he became uncontrollable and resented having to wear a collar and chain. Working to get rid of them badly galled his neck, and he would not allow anyone near to dress the wound. His general health gradually deteriorated and at last he had to be shot a few months before the outbreak of war in 1914.

TO turn to more docile animals, a few words might be said concerning the antelopes of The Royal Warwickshire Regiment. The antelope is the regimental badge, so that this animal, actually a black buck, is appropriate as the living image of that badge. On ceremonial parades he wears a handsome cloth embroidered with the regimental badge and round his neck is a wide collar to which is

attached two white cords, being led by the Buck-Leader and Assistant Buck-Leader, one on either side, on these occasions. The antelopes can usually be trusted to play their part on special parades, but sometimes they can become very stubborn and cause no little embarrassment to the regiment. A case in point is that of Bobby, who, whilst marching-past at a review held at Aldershot, disgraced himself and disarranged the ranks of the regiment by suddenly stopping immediately in front of the saluting-base when King George V was taking the salute, getting down on his knees and calmly nibbling some particularly succulent grass which he had spotted. His leaders were compelled to remind him, none too gently, to conduct himself in a more soldierly manner. Again, during a Tattoo performance at Aldershot before the late war, Bobby was horrified to find that he had been placed behind a Drum-Major instead of in front, at the head of the massed bands. This loss of precedence was too much for his pride, so he charged the resplendent figure ahead of him and ripped his trousers badly. After this the Drum-Major was only too glad to have Bobby in front of him.

A goose may seem a queer bird to become a regimental mascot, yet our oldest regiment of Cavalry of the Line, The Royal Dragoons, had such a pet from 1921 to 1927. Jock, as he was christened, was bought by the officers' mess caterer in September 1921, at Ballinasloe, Ireland, to fatten for the coming Christmas dinner. Meanwhile he was allowed to wander at will about the barracks pending his execution, but when the festive season arrived he had become such a firm favourite that no one could be found with hard enough heart to do the deed, and in consequence Jock was reprieved.

A particular incident that enhanced Jock's popularity with The Royals was his encounter with a milk-boy. This youth had been warned not to enter the officers' kitchen-yard when the goose was there, because he considered that his special domain. However, the boy went in, but made a hasty exit with Jock hanging on to the seat of his pants. From the yells let off by the lad it was apparent that Jock's bill had penetrated to something more solid than serge.

In 1922 The Royals moved to Hounslow, Jock travelling 'on the establishment' as 'Mascots, regimental,' 1. In his next station he started to assert his authority over the

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animal kingdom and would allow no cat or dog, not belonging to his regiment, to trespass in the barracks. Should he spot such an one, he would descend upon it from nowhere like a tornado, accompanied by ear-piercing shrieks. The victims never stopped to inquire the reason for such a tumult.

Jock was a regular Nosey Parker and could never resist waddling up to any group of soldiers in conversation, taking up a position among them, and inclining his head on one side as though he understood what was passing. One day, in 1923, at Aldershot he noticed a party of officers and ladies in barracks and, thinking that this was an unusual occurrence, waddled up to look into it. To his surprise he found that one of the officers was His Majesty King George V and one of the ladies Queen Mary. Jock was formally introduced and the story of his 'enlistment' told, which amused Their Majesties.

The Royals went to Egypt in 1927, and when, two years later, the officers' mess was pulled down for reconstruction, Jock's quarters were moved to the stables. This loss of dignity was too much for his pride: he refused to eat in such humble conditions and, like old soldiers, faded away.

**D**URING the Great War of 1914-1918 The Scots Guards acquired two mascots of a decidedly utilitarian kind—to wit, two cows, dubbed Bella and Bertha. They were found on a deserted farm in Flanders towards the end of 1914, and, as no one appeared to own them, the regiment adopted them. They could not have fallen into better hands, for the Scotsmen treated them with the greatest kindness and saw that they had good bed and board whatever the conditions. In return, and to show their gratitude to their rescuers, the cows gave fresh milk every day throughout the war. The Scots Guards covered a good deal of ground in France and Flanders, but wherever they went Bella and Bertha followed and underwent the same risks from shot and shell as the remainder of the regiment.

When the Victory March took place through London in 1919 the two cows accompanied their regiment as it marched past the King. For a few years after that they lived a quiet

life in retirement on Lord Blythwood's estate in Renfrewshire, where they died. Silver models of both cows now adorn the headquarters of the regiment and a hoof from each cow has been mounted as a snuff-box.

Regimental mascots have not been limited to animals that, when in their ceremonial uniform, serve as picturesque adornments when marching at the head of their units. Muriel of The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers would have been a star in a farmyard, but being an outside pig could hardly be an ornament to a military unit, except in the form of ham or bacon. She was found in a near-by jungle when the regiment was stationed at Sialkot, India, in 1919. She was then quite a baby, apparently an abandoned one, but the Irishmen fed her on milk from a baby's ordinary feeding-bottle, and she soon waxed fat. After being weaned her rations consisted of the very best the regiment could provide, a diet which resulted in her developing an enormous girth, for she grew to an immense size. However, her bulk did not interfere with her agility, for, when the regiment moved to Belgaum and did a weekly cross-country run, Muriel always took part, usually coming in fourth or fifth. As though this was not sufficient exercise to improve her figure, she also accompanied the regiment in training, squealing merrily during the assault.

She early developed a liking for music and could always be found near the band when it was playing-out or practising. This led her to accompany the band on the march and, having made friends with the Drum-Major, she trotted along by his side as the self-appointed regimental mascot. She seemed to realise that her position required dignity in behaviour, and never once did she slip up on the numerous parades which she led. Church parades sometimes gave rise to a little ill-timed entertainment, for, not only would Muriel march with the band to church, but if those on duty at the doors were not on the alert she would bolt inside and then have to be hunted out unceremoniously.

When The Inniskillings departed from India for Iraq poor Muriel had to be left behind, squealing dismally as she was torn from the regiment in which she had made her home for four years.

# Apprentices of the Road

COLIN HEALEY

CARRYING on a centuries-old tradition, two youngsters recently left their German, Schleswig-Holstein, home on a two-year walking journey that will take them all over the country. They are young carpenters who, conforming to an ancient practice, set out after the first three years of their apprenticeship and learn their job by working under the masters of their craft wherever they may be found in Germany.

Unique in customs and dress, the fraternity came into being, through the *Hamburger Zimmermeister*s, who became known throughout the world for their magnificent carpentry. Various branches of this brotherhood were set up throughout Germany and they took the name of the 'Brotherhood of Stranger Carpenters.' Their headquarters are in Bremen, and before a town or city branch can be established a total of not less than seven carpenters must be available as members. When a youth decides to take up a travelling apprenticeship he must apply to Bremen for registration. His ceremonious initiation at his local branch includes drinking two litres of beer and the entry of his name on the Brotherhood's roll. This is his contract, and, indeed, the beer he drinks is called 'contract beer.' After this, the young apprentice must collect his things, bid farewell to his family and friends, leave his home town, and not return until he has completed his apprenticeship tour.

The cult lay great emphasis on the apprentice's picturesque dress. With bell-bottomed Manchester-velvet trousers, he wears a matching wide-brimmed hat, a vest-type jacket, with large buttons and a black neckerchief which contrasts with his white shirt. The neckerchief is called an *ehrbarkheit*, which, roughly translated, denotes honesty or modesty. The apprentice's sole baggage is a strong walking-stick, called a *stenz*, a

knapsack, or *berliner*, which contains bedding, eating-utensils, and his toilet kit, and to complete his baggage he carries a roll of tools.

IN earlier years the youths travelled abroad, but nowadays they confine themselves to their own country. They are free to travel throughout the British, American, and French Zones of Germany, but very few of them enter the Russian Zone. The apprentice may call on any local craftsman and ask for work, or he can seek a branch of the Brotherhood and ask for support or to be nominated for a job. He must not take on individual jobs, but must only work under the supervision of a *meister*. An apprentice can stay with a *meister* for a period of six to eight weeks, but, if he fails to find work in any particular town, then he must leave within twenty-four hours. Should he decline to leave, he is politely escorted to the town boundary by the two local senior apprentices. Another strange custom is for the youth to receive at each town where he works a card bearing a list of the benefits to which he is entitled. Should he, however, incur any debts or commit any sins during his stay, then his shortcomings are recorded on a duplicate card for future reference.

Throughout Germany certain hotels—'trade inns'—cater for members of the Brotherhood. A traditional ceremony takes place whenever a young apprentice calls at a trade inn. He spreads a red handkerchief over his *berliner*, knocks on the door of the inn and says to the landlord: 'With favour and permission, is there for a righteous stranger carpenter apprentice a harbour here?' He is given the answer: 'That is laudable.' The stranger then enters the inn, sits down and puts his belongings under the table. His host bids him: 'Good-day, comrade, you are a stranger?' and the carpenter replies: 'That is laudable.'

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He produces his credentials and gives the landlord details of his tour. The landlord, in turn, draws a glass of beer as a gift to the youth. The apprentice is provided with a room for the night and usually receives a free meal before continuing on his way. Should the apprentice become ill during his travels, a collection is made on his behalf.

THE traditional ritual of these travellers is very highly respected by all craftsmen and apprentices throughout Germany. Should any mishaps occur during a visit to a town, then the stranger is given full backing and support by the local society. He, for his part, must also uphold the rites and ceremony, paying particular attention to his dress, which at all times must be immaculate.

After leaving a town, he is accompanied through the streets by his fellow-craftsmen, who march the goose-step and sing special songs. A large bottle of schnapps is taken along and the party stops at every street-

corner whilst each in turn swings the bottle over his head three times and takes a drink.

Perhaps the most impressive part of this tradition is when one of the travelling apprentices dies during his tour. His coffin is carried to the grave by trade-mates in funeral dress and top-hats. They are followed by other carpenters in shirt-sleeves, each carrying one of the tools the dead man used during his apprenticeship. When the coffin is lowered into the grave, earth is scattered on to it and those carrying the tools throw on to the coffin a lemon each, but why this is done remains a secret to those who practise it. Then the following words are repeated by the minister: 'As a stranger thou travelled, as a stranger thou died, and as a stranger thou wilt lie in strange earth.'

So the ancient tradition is carried on, and when an itinerant apprentice reaches the end of his travels he returns home and completes his apprenticeship with an examination. If successful, he himself then becomes a *meister*.

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### Humility

*What brain, what purpose gave it birth,  
Who knows? Perchance a cause for mirth:  
Some toy by gods designed.  
In ages far beyond our thought  
The universe in space was wrought  
By some mysterious mind.  
Each icy moon, each flaming sun,  
Some power decreed them, every one.*

*But why? In vain man scans the skies  
And seeks some answer to devise  
Why aught should ever be.  
The comet hurtling to and fro  
May swift on destined purpose go  
For cause we cannot see.  
Beyond man's dreams, beyond his guess,  
This mystery he must confess.*

*From time eternal it has been,  
This wondrous awe-inspiring scene,  
Those million flame-lit spheres:  
The night-sky sprinkled with their light  
A symbol of unbounded might,  
Remote from human fears.  
Ten million worlds lie in His hand,  
Dare we assess how high we stand?*

E. R. MATHEWSON.





## Plates, First Class

KEN DUNN

EVERY time I see, at a safe distance, a scarlet and black Cunard funnel I feel a mild proprietary interest. Other feelings arise in me as well, for have I not sailed the Western Ocean beneath those colours? Was there not a time when I could call one of those great vessels 'my ship'? Indeed there was—precisely three weeks, to be exact. It was an affair of convalescence, and those three weeks were enough to effect a cure both for my ailment and my hankering after a life on the ocean wave. But while it lasted it was fun—of a sort.

The doctor had recommended 'Sea breezes—a voyage if possible,' but ideas of deck-chair sunshine to Madeira or Stromboli by night had to be modified in the knowledge that I could just about afford a day excursion to the Isle of Man. Then I remembered a friend who was vaguely, but quite influentially, in shipping, and the first steps in my convalescence were watching for the postman. I had said that in any capacity, except perhaps stoking, I was game to sign on. Fortunately I was reasonably strong and prepared to be very adaptable, and it was summer in England.

During the days that followed, my thoughts were very much concerned with foam-flecked deep blue oceans, scanning far horizons, and filling my lungs all day and night with pure

ozone. I began to assume a superior attitude towards future engagements and events and reminded people that I might be abroad, or at sea. I felt better already. The cure was beginning to work.

In the event, my only sight of the deep and dark blue ocean was what I could see of it through a lavatory porthole while perched uncomfortably upon the rim of a bath. The porthole was right at the ship's stern and enabled me, on the many occasions when I cultivated toilet necessity as a fine art, to watch the creamy wake and the air-poised seabirds following us. Those stolen intervals of sea-watching were my only delight and recreation while at sea, and, if I did develop anything like the traditional nautical roll, it was on return journeys to the glory-hole, and the result of watching the ship's wake at the speed we were making. I still love the sea, but what killed my longing to be a sailor was my job on board ship.

I suppose I was a sailor, because in order to sign on I had to join the Seamen's and Firemen's Union, and agree to the then standard rate of pay for my particular job, about thirty shillings a week with all found. Those were the hardest-earned shillings I ever picked up, but, as a quick and effectual convalescence went with them, I suppose I

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should not grumble. But I am running on ahead a bit.

MY friend in shipping had got quickly to work, and romantic thoughts about voyages of discovery, which extended even so far as 'Ceylon's isle,' were short-circuited by a wire telling me to report at Canada Dock, Liverpool, to join the s.s. *Samaria*. In what capacity was not stated, but I soon found out that 'my ship' was one of the newest luxury liners of a group much given over to millionaire pleasure-cruising. According to the glossy booklets I had been collecting with great zeal, the *Samaria* was more lavishly fitted up than the royal yacht, while her cruising range included places like Rio, Bermuda, Jamaica, Panama, Hawaii. Guitars and gold bars, tropical glamour—there was magic in the air, even in the sooty, drizzling air of Liverpool. In my mind's eye I was already in some mildly unstrenuous niche like that of assistant purser, librarian to the ship's orchestra, or reserve assistant in the sick-bay, and I hoped there would be plenty of agreeable books on board. I wondered a trifle uneasily about tropical kit.

At the Canada Dock I was directed into a queue of widely-assorted individuals, who might have been early arrivers at the turnstile of a big football match. They looked more like mill-hands than seafarers, and I transferred my attention to as much of the *Samaria* as was to be seen. She was a large and solid-looking liner, far from being in the four- or three-funnelled class, but already famous, I had gathered, for her sumptuous fittings and extreme steadiness in a seaway. Her fresh paintwork brightened up an otherwise drab scene that miserable wet summer day, and she had every appearance of getting steam up.

Our queue shuffled slowly forward until I found it my turn to look through a sort of pigeon-hole in a wooden hut and face an unprepossessing man with a walrus moustache and several pencils of various colours with which he had been marking a set of typed lists. My telegraphed instructions set him a real poser and consultation had to be made with a broad-backed somebody whose face I never saw. The delay was unpopular with the queue, and there were sundry pushings and murmurings, until a providential whistle blew somewhere and somebody bleated: 'They've bloody well kicked off. 'Urry up there in

front.' This wit acted like a safety-valve and started a buzz of conversation about previous football occasions. At last walrus moustache handed me a grubby piece of paper and honoured me with as big a grin as if I had won the first booby-prize. I remembered that grin many times during the next few days.

Beyond the hut another uniformed individual inspected the scrawl on my chit. I almost expected him to say: 'No. 4 Platform, over the bridge,' but he grunted something about 'Far gangway,' and as I picked my way through a vast shed full of bustle and echoes I glanced at my passport. Plainly enough the blue pencilling said 'P. 1st,' and I felt elated again and blessed the friend to whom I was to be so indebted, for what could 'P. 1st' mean other than 'Purser, First Class?' Well, for one thing, it could mean 'Plates, First Class.' And that is just what it did mean.

'PLATE-WASHER, First Class,' to be precise, and the qualification referred not to any degree of proficiency or seniority in the art, but to the fact that I was allocated to the First Class Saloon, which used a dozen times as many plates as any other section of the ship. It was a stunner, but any attempt to back out at this stage, I decided, might be regarded as mutiny after I had signed several documents without perusing any of them very deeply, and in any case I had little time to dwell on the thing that had happened, as I was no sooner on board than I was almost pounced upon by a melancholy little man whose actual name was Smith, but who was universally referred to and addressed as 'Plates,' just as, I suppose, the ship's radio staff would answer to 'Sparks' and her carpenter, if luxury liners had any, to 'Chips.'

Mr Smith, I discovered in due course, was prone in leisure moments to practise upon a mournful-sounding wind-instrument called a recorder, but he had a huge sense of duty and of his own importance in the ship's organisation, and his eyes gleamed like a spider's as he claimed me as 'his man' and mentioned that 'another lad' would be coming as well, which, as it turned out, never happened: maybe somebody got a better job on a farm. Perhaps it was as well, for I got on pretty well with 'Plates,' but with two men under him his official importance would have been too much for him, and, besides, there was little enough room to work in as it was.

## PLATES, FIRST CLASS

'Plates' said he liked the looks of me, and expressed the hope that we should have many trips together, at which I made no reply. He went on to imply that there was much skill involved in 'our' particular job, into the secrets of which he would admit me by personal demonstration, all in due course. I gathered that he had served in Cunarders since the days when they were assisted by sails, and that when he felt assured that he could retire and leave the plates in capable hands he intended to run a coffee-stall at Liverpool pier-head for the benefit of tram-drivers as well as mariners, although any customer with a Cunard jersey would get an extra spoonful of sugar. I made up my mind that later on there would have to be an understanding with 'Plates' or I should find myself managing the whole of the saloon crockery while the little man stood by in the full pride of non-playing captaincy.

WITHIN an hour my first nautical occupation was in full swing, for, although no plate-washing was due until the passengers embarked at the landing-stage, there are always below-deck jobs in a floating hotel such as the *Samaria* was, and I was soon polishing for dear life some of the gleaming metal utensils and containers in the vast kitchen. If, I thought, the whole of the vessel were as trim and polished as this part, what a fine ship she must be. Every rivet, bolt, hook, every inch of every step, every shelf, positively gleamed. I wondered what the engines would look like, but I never had a chance to find out. I only heard them in the distant depths, deeper even than the glory-hole. But apparently the more polishing there is, the more you can do, and the more I did.

One thing I noted, as my aching hands plied their rag and bathbrick at top speed, was that my fellow-polishers, although we were all part of a ship's company, used never a nautical word, but a great many land-lubber terms of the really baser sort. Moreover, their topics ranged but rarely from the twin eternal verities of women and League football: we might all have been at work in the basement of the Adelphi or other big hotel ashore.

While working with the polish gang, I lost sight of 'Plates' Smith, but received many expressions of condolence from buddies who made it their business to find out in what

capacity I was on board. These invariably took the form of the single word 'Hell' and I was looked at more closely, in much the way I imagine a lifer is when he joins other prisoners in the Black Maria. My convalescence was becoming more promising hourly.

There was a blessed interlude on the Saturday, a couple of days having passed in an excess of polishing, when tugs undocked *Samaria* and she anchored in the Mersey while other ocean ships took their turn at the floating landing-stage. I played truant from the polishing gang, which in any case was breaking up as sailing-time approached and more and more of the regular people appeared from nowhere to take up their jobs, and I found a corner on a high deck from which I could watch the busy waterway. It was a warm and bright day again and Mersey had never looked so clean and fresh. The great Liver Bird surmounting the tower of 'England's first skyscraper' looked down upon the shuttling ferry-steamers and quaint little coveys of barges throwing up clouds of spray from a tideway which appeared as smooth as a pond from the lofty *Samaria*. Faintly blue in the far east I could descry the hills of Derbyshire, forming a bright backcloth to the colony of hammerhead cranes and tall lattice which marked the famous shipyards on the Cheshire shore, and swinging to the tide, like stately old ducks, were the several ancient black-and-white 'old wooden walls' then kept as training-ships. Fie on them! Was I not going off to sea this very day, accepted as a sailor without having ever set foot on such as they? Farewell, broad Mersey! No need for me to sniff deeply your familiar air to-day, with all the broad Atlantic awaiting me. No harm in thinking!

IN the afternoon the real seamen took charge: blue-jerseyed and weather-beaten sailors began to appear on all sides. There were shrill whistles and words of command shouted through megaphones as the line's veteran tender *Skirmisher*—the only Cunard ship with a name not ending in 'ia' until the advent of the two *Queens* years later—nuzzled *Samaria* towards her berth at the stage. Donkey-engines began to splutter more hot water than steam. We were moving in to pick up those Great Ones, our passengers, and with a final look towards Liverpool's

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red-sandstone cathedral and the tramcars looking like mobile matchboxes I responded to a rough order which sent me out of the sunshine and the English breeze—sent me to the hot steel passages and glaringly-lit cubby-holes, throbbing to the beat of ventilating-fans and increasingly redolent of hot kitchen-fats, where we were to go about our business of feeding and then cleaning up after the Great Ones of the Saloon. I felt I had visited a ship and left her again.

It was all so novel, and there was so much to do, that hours passed before I became aware of the throb of *Samaria's* engines and remembered I was afloat. I saw nothing of our departure, and by the time I got a chance to look eagerly through a porthole in the vegetable-room I was astonished to find it was dark. All I could see was a long line of quivering reflections of light spilt from the decks on to the black water, and silver gleams of broken spray that leapt like fire. We appeared to be moving at the speed of an express-train. I succeeded in opening the port a few inches and could have stayed there all night feeling the whip of the wind and watching the dancing lights, but an argument as to how many pubs there actually are in Lime Street was broken into by a loud shout to 'Shut that bloody 'ole,' and I was soon dealing again with vegetables in sacks.

THE first night or two at sea I spent, rather than slept, in the glory-hole, the accepted dormitory for minions of minor steward's degree, in which 'Plates,' my chief, occupied a cubby-hole corner which he referred to as 'my quarters.' But I soon became an 'old sailor,' to use the parallel of a military commonplace, and found a comfortable if illicit bunk in a small cabin kept in reserve, I believed, for casualties or possible stowaways. The atmosphere within the glory-hole was much too solid a thing altogether: the snoring, moaning, grunting, and flatulence were not to be endured. Most of my fellows were a greasy if good-hearted lot.

My working-day started at half-past five. Going west, I realised I was losing an hour of sleep each night, but nothing was said about deducting anything from working-hours. The very first job, after a mug of hot coffee which went down really well, was the disposal of empty bottles which somebody had been collecting from the luxuriant rooms 'upstairs'

since first light of day. There was every kind of bottle which brewer, blender, or distiller ever filled, and although some were not strictly empties, I, for one, had little inclination to sample the leavings at that hour of the morning. Any sudden sinking of *Samaria*, I reflected among my hundreds of unsorted empties, would be accompanied by a most prodigious gurgling. The early morning collection of dead men completed, we had time for a shave and wash and our breakfast. After the first day I continued my self-instruction as an 'old sailor' and made other arrangements for myself than the official staff meals.

The first passengers' breakfasts were served from half-past seven, which was too early an hour for all but a few. However, the first of the day's plates began to trickle in at 7.32 a.m., and shortly afterwards Plate-washer's Mate, First Class, had got down to it. The pantry dedicated to 'Plates' Smith and myself—as I have said already, it was perhaps well that the other chap never showed up—was about twelve feet by eight. At the end opposite the door stood two large metal vats of boiling water, one soapy and one clear. Racks were fitted along one of the long sides for drying plates in, the other side of the pantry adjoining the corridor or tunnel along which the waiters passed from the dining-tables. They pushed the piles of used plates through an open hatch on to a wide scrubbed counter. This had a square hole in the middle through which any scraps were dropped, the scraped plates then being piled into a metal creel which was suspended by a chain and when full was lowered into Soapy. An electric agitator was then switched on and after a few seconds the chain was re-adjusted and the creel of plates dipped into Clear, which also had a mechanical swisher operated by a switch. Then out came the creel again and the scalding plates had to be unloaded and set into the drying racks. It was then time for the whole business to be redone, as hundreds of plates were accumulating. The essential thing was to keep the process non-stop, and, while the system was well-thought-out, there was not sufficient elbow-room, and the palatial cuisine of this millionaire's liner entailed many hundreds of dirty plates for each of the main meals. A couple of boys kept clearing the racks, but there was an insatiable demand for plates from the service-room, though perhaps the worst feature was the heat and the handling of the scalding



plates when the creel had to be unloaded. The only source of air in the pantry was the forced-draught apparatus, the nozzle of which was set in a wall angle. If one could stand still, it was possible to adjust the draught so that a cool current played upon about one square foot of one's person, but all the benefit was lost outside the cone of draught.

AND then there was 'Violet,' so-called, I suppose, for obvious reasons. She was the object of my loathing and abhorrence and makes me shudder still whenever I set eyes on an ocean liner. 'Violet' was a vast container which stood under the hole in the counter. The first plates to come from breakfast carried grapefruit skins, usually with most of the fruit untouched; then followed the remains of various kinds of cereal, kipper-bones and haddock-bones, rejected bacon, eggs, kidneys, liver, sausage, toast, marmalade. 'Violet' received them all, and in 'Violet' they stayed, because she was too bulky for one man to handle and her removal would have caused unthinkable bottle-necks and delays in the corridors. So she was emptied and scoured last thing at night, a rite permeated with nocturnal incense.

On top of the breakfast leavings went the scraps of a five-course luncheon and, as a succulent upper layer, all that the fastidious and over-fed rejected when their seven-course dinner was served. This heterogeneous mass of rich and highly-spiced food stood in 'Violet' in the superheated atmosphere of the steam-filled kitchen throughout the long day. Then would 'Plates' turn up with a greasy and boxer-like individual clad only in singlet and slacks and on the word of command I had to grip one of 'Violet's' handles. With head averted, and my breath locked up in my lungs, I helped to lug the foul receptacle out of the inner sanctum and through the vegetable-room, where its malodorous contents were tipped down a chute into the sea, after morning kippers had made a brief but effective reappearance. Nightly my heart seemed to follow them into the deep Atlantic, to the infinite joy of tougher beholders: even my superior officer permitted himself a cynical little smile.

'PLATES' SMITH was a curious little character. If I had turned out to be the

type he had hoped from the start, undoubtedly I should have had the exclusive pleasure of washing every 1st Class plate on the *Samaria* right through the voyage, while he scraped the arriving piles into 'Violet' and pushed them creelwards. But he respected me for being a firm believer in the principle of divided labour on a fair basis, and by the time we had reached the New World I am sure, had I pressed a point, he would have been happily busy at my behest. The heavy burden of responsibility through seniority would have passed from his narrow shoulders.

Life in those superheated cubby-holes could have been hell, as it undoubtedly was for the pale and sickly youngsters who were badly put upon by some of the middle orders of flabby, greasy, and lazy stewards. I worked and whistled and saw to it that nobody suspected the job was calling for my last ounce of endurance at times. And I slept well and ate well, even if illicitly.

The excellent food which the shipping company contributed towards my return to health and strength was actually a product of my own opportunism. The waiters *en route* to the dining-saloon passed the open door of my pantry usually with their trays balanced on the palm of one hand and at about shoulder height. As the pantry floor was a step higher than the passage, these laden trays passed at a convenient level for both hand and eye, and there was frequently enough congestion of traffic to cause minor blocks. I quickly became adept at whipping off a laden plate or dish, and, as I had no time to feed while the Great Ones were at it, I made a collection of the platefuls I fancied most upon a convenient shelf above the hatch. When plate-washing was over and things tidied up, I turned to the unwittingly offered craftsmanship of the Chef First Class and selected those samples which had best survived the ordeal of waiting in the humidity of the pantry. I fed very well.

WHOEVER had worked out the round of duties for 'Plate-washer's mate' was obviously no believer in idle hands. There were other jobs to be gone straight at after the clear-up following each meal. These ranged from grinding coffee to polishing and replenishing cruets, and I found that the only reliable way of not being impressed into further fatigue jobs when the regular ones

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were done was the old British Army dodge of not being there. At such moments I could have been found gazing at the ship's wake from the lavatory porthole I had discovered right aft, but I dare not prolong the joy as I could have wished, owing to my tendency to fall asleep. As it was, a short nap towards teatime—a meal blessedly free from plates: cups were the care of a rival pantry whose existence we seemed to ignore—enabled me to face the strenuous dinner-peak much better.

After somebody had said that we had passed the Ambrose lightship, the distant but noticeable throb of the engines suddenly stopped. My first impact with the great United States was medical inspection (perfunctory) and a quiz by officials who had come aboard from a launch, but as I stated I had no desire to go ashore I was not worried unduly, although one officious person thought it so strange that a 'sailor' on his first voyage had no wish to buy his girl a souvenir from New York that I had visions of being motored to Sing Sing for further interrogation, or at best being locked into a cabin until *Samaria* sailed again. Actually, she was to make a quick turn-round and sail back to Liverpool with a party of Very Important People on their way to the League of Nations who had missed one of the big boats going to Southampton.

While the unusual bustle to accomplish this hasty return went on, I was attached to a polishing gang. We attacked everything polishable, especially on the open boat-deck, and found there was much more to polish on that side of the ship from which the nearer part of New York was visible. A further job given to me was a special hunt for missing bottles in the main 1st Class

rooms. It seemed as if our recent passengers had indulged in late-night games of hunt the empties, and that most of the hunting had been fatuous. There were empties pushed down the sides of chair cushions, under cushions, and inside cushions. There were empties cached within the forced-draught ventilators, and a real find was a live bottle of wine inside a grand-piano. It went down so well that I felt constrained to render the 'Prelude in C Sharp Minor' by Rachmaninoff, to the indignation of the Chief Steward, who chanced to pass that way in the company of somebody even more august. But I had forty-one empty bottles, including the very recent one, and felt I was earning my pay.

My one and only venture ashore was a furtive last-minute one, which merely confirmed my impression that N.Y. was incomparably gritty, noisy, and quick-moving. It also made me realise that I had very little cash. Even the return to familiar food-smell and glaring electric-light on the Cunarder was like coming back to a corner of good old England.

The return trip—so much for my romantic visions of foreign ports—was just a repetition of the outward run, with the exception that we had some rough weather and I was able to see from my precarious lookout perched on the rim of the bath what the North Atlantic could be like at times. I took off my hat, in spirit, to the pioneers in sailing-ships and small early steamers little bigger than Mersey ferries who had fought their way across 'the pond,' and wondered how they got on for plate-washing. In due course we made the Mersey, very tranquil- and muddy-looking, and 'Plates' Smith was presumably one degree nearer his pier-head coffee-stall.

My convalescence was complete.

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### Sailors' Collars

*'Sailor, sailor, from the sea,  
Grant a little wish for me.'  
'Anything that I can do,  
That I will, and gladly, too.'*

*'Sailors' collars, so they say,  
Bring good luck from far away;  
Let me touch your collar fine  
With this finger-tip of mine.'*

*'Lady, lady, of the land,  
Stretching forth your pretty hand,  
May my lucky collar bring  
All you wish of everything.'*

*'Sailor, sailor, from the sea,  
Thank you for your courtesy,  
May your collar, navy-blue,  
Bring the best of luck for you.'*

ELIZABETH FLEMING.

# Jane Welsh Carlyle as My Mother Saw Her

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GEORGINA SIME

MY mother used to tell me about a visit she once paid to Alexander (afterwards Sir Alexander) Macmillan, the publisher, during which her fellow-guest was the wife of Thomas Carlyle. My mother had a great admiration for *Sartor Resartus*, whole pages of which she could repeat by heart, and doubtless this admiration made itself evident and perhaps influenced Mrs Carlyle in her favour; at any rate, the two met as strangers and parted as something very like friends. My mother was fond of recalling every item of their encounter, and, as Mrs Carlyle has not had too many kind words said about her, I propose to resurrect my own remembrances of what my mother told me and to record them here, as nearly as I can, in her own words.

Perhaps I ought to say, by way of preliminary, that my mother at the time of this meeting was in her thirties, while Mrs Carlyle was approaching the close of her life. And I ought to say, too, that my mother was accustomed to the writing tribe; she was not a raw schoolgirl going to London for a treat, but a woman grown, well-read, with a liberal mind and a natural turn for that very rare thing, common-sense. She generally, I think, appraised men and women very fairly, and she knew her own mind about them quite clearly. Perhaps I stress these small points unduly, but, if so, it is because I very rarely heard her speak of any woman as she did of Mrs Carlyle, and I should like to indicate that her reasons for doing so were likely to be sound.

I have an idea that much of the criticism levelled at Mrs Carlyle has arisen out of a certain jealousy provoked by her brilliant gift for putting things before the eyes of her fellow-mortals; it is difficult to like a very brilliant creature when one is not specially brilliant oneself, and perhaps it was unusual for Mrs

Carlyle to encounter a woman who approached her in the spirit shown, I am sure, by my mother, a spirit that revealed admiration, a desire to be helpful, and possibly a rather timid affection that asked for no requital but only lurked in the background. At any rate, friends the two became. The week or two passed in Mrs Carlyle's company made a milestone in my mother's life and I set down here, exactly as they were related to me, the occurrences of this, to her, memorable little bit of time.

ONE evening when Mrs Carlyle came down dressed for dinner—and looking queenly as she entered the room,—my mother liked to interpolate at this point of her narrative—her host came forward and paid her a compliment upon the velvet dress she was wearing. She smiled, visibly appreciated the compliment, and said: 'He'—so she always alluded to her husband, as if no other 'he' existed in the world—'made me a present of it. He told me to choose what I liked and to have it made where I liked, too.' She paused a moment and then remarked: 'So I had it made by Élise. I had always wanted to have something from there. And he said I could. I am glad you like it.' I don't know how much impression the name of Élise made on Alexander Macmillan. Possibly he had never heard before of that most expensive modiste. Élise was dress-maker to the Queen. But Mrs Macmillan and my mother doubtless exchanged a glance.

'It is beautiful,' interjected Mrs Macmillan at this point, and so indeed, my mother assured me, it was.

Mrs Carlyle then sat down, and everybody thought the show was over, but no. After a moment Mrs Carlyle continued: 'And later

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on, when I was wearing it at a reception, a woman—I don't know who it was, though I can guess—sympathised with him on having such an extravagant wife—he working so hard and she going out and spending all that money!' Here my mother would always make another little stop before relating how Mrs Carlyle went on, with a sort of flourish in her voice: 'He just said to her: "My wife is the most economical woman in London. Good-night." And he walked away.'

It was clear that Mrs Carlyle felt as Everywoman feels when she hears that in her absence her husband has taken her part against another woman. I do not know anything that so inspires a woman with joy. 'He paid Elise's bill without saying a word to me about it, and,' she repeated, 'he said that I was the most economical woman in London!' And at this, according to my mother, everybody laughed.

This first tale suggests a second, also relating to clothes, but this time to the clothes worn by 'Him.' It seemed that Carlyle never would go to his tailor without his wife, and was especially insistent on her being present at every fitting. The article concerned in the incident was an overcoat. Carlyle stood like a mannequin in a tailor's workroom and his fitter whirled him round as the scrutiny of the garment prescribed. It was a lengthy business, but it seemed to be over at last and Mrs Carlyle was preparing to rise and go, when the fitter, still on his knees, turned, glanced first at her husband and then at her, and, pointing to the overcoat, said: 'Shall it have a velvet collar, Ma'am?'

Mrs Carlyle laughed as she ended this story, and, by my mother's account, she had a merry laugh. She laughed seldom, but, when she did, it was because she was genuinely amused. A laugh may reveal a good deal, and a merry laugh is surely one of the most charming and persuasive letters of introduction with which Nature can furnish a mortal for his journey through the world. I think that after Mrs Carlyle had told that little tale the company would all go in to dinner cheerily and would eat well of the fare provided for them.

I HAVE a further story, which presents Mrs Carlyle in a somewhat different light. It shows that she could laugh at herself, but, though the anecdote sounds the note of comedy, it also has, at its close, a bar or two

of graver music, which suggests, to my mind, what trouble her nervous system must have given her.

She set out by herself one afternoon to buy a pair of those elastic-sided boots which those who were alive in the late-Victorian days will be able to visualise; they were usually made of a light leather, occasionally of velvet. We must imagine her as in the boot-shop, with the young salesman on his knees before her, offering pair after pair for her inspection. But the pair of Mrs Carlyle's imagination and hopes was not among them. The salesman brought more and more, and such of them as were wholly unacceptable were instantly put aside, but now and then one of the others that might conceivably do, if nothing better were available, Mrs Carlyle hung over her arm, so that she might consider it later when a final selection was to be made. The boots of each pair were united to one another by a fairly long cord fastened at either end to their respective leathers. The inspection continued and the short leet grew longer, until Mrs Carlyle had perhaps half-a-dozen pairs suspended over her arm and dangling down to her knees. There might have been still more to come, but suddenly the shopper lost heart for her quest and said what every woman in every century always has said—that she could see nothing there to her taste but that she would look in the next time she was passing; and no doubt the young salesman replied that they were just expecting a new consignment in.

Mrs Carlyle got up and made her way out of the shop. She had wanted the boots for some special occasion and was put out at having to leave without them. As for the young man, he had more than enough on his hands in cleaning up the mess his customer had left behind her. Both were disappointed; both were engrossed with their own thoughts. Mrs Carlyle walked out into the winter twilight, and I imagine that she would walk quickly, for this little incident took place when she was still a comparatively young woman. By the time my mother saw her, rheumatism had borne hard upon those slender feet of hers and she walked with difficulty, though, even then, my mother said of her that 'she moved like an aristocrat.'

After Mrs Carlyle had gone a considerable way, it struck her that she heard someone running behind her and calling out to some one or other: 'Stop!' It did not occur to her that she herself was being hailed and she



## JANE WELSH CARLYLE AS MY MOTHER SAW HER

continued her quick walk homewards, but the runner went more quickly still. The words, 'Stop, there!' grew more distinct, and the steps drew nearer and nearer until they were immediately behind her. She turned, and what she saw was the young salesman of the boot-shop looking considerably the worse for wear—he *had* had a run for it!—and with an expression on his face very different from that of so short a time ago in the shop. It was, to say the least of it, menacing.

The young man was too breathless to speak, but he pointed to the arm which his late customer was holding to her side. She glanced down, and there, hung over it, were the five or six pairs of boots that she had put aside for consideration. The shop was one in which she had not been before and she had gone from it without leaving any address. The salesman was taking her for a thief; he thought she had made off with the boots, and indeed it all looked as if she might have done so.

Mrs Carlyle was an artist in life and so had no difficulty in seeing the situation from *his* point of view. Yes, he took her for a thief. All her wits seemed to forsake her; she felt nothing inside her but a complete blank. The two stood looking at one another for a moment in the winter dusk and then the young man, still without speaking, began to detach, one by one, the pairs of boots Mrs Carlyle was carrying, and when he had ranged them all securely on *his* arm, he burrowed into a pocket, produced a pencil and a piece of paper, which he handed to her, and mutely signified that he wanted her name and address.

She understood, but she could remember nothing. She could not remember who she was, or where she lived. Her mind was a complete blank. She looked at the shopman, and couldn't even explain. After a moment, shaking her head, she handed back the pencil and paper to the young man without a word. I presume that he regarded her as a mad-woman, or at least as having something wrong with her head; anyhow, he did not insist further but turned and walked off with the retrieved boots. She was alone in the twilight once more.

Yes, but she still could remember nothing. She could not remember who she was, or where her home was, or even if she had a

home. Through the blankness came the consciousness that her feet were moving, that they were carrying her along, that they were taking her somewhere. She passively let them have their way, for she felt it would be useless to ask questions of any of the passers-by. And after a while she found herself in Cheyne Row; her feet had carried her back to where she belonged. As she stood there, all came back to her—her own name, her husband's, the house they lived in—and a deep gratitude flooded her heart. She was herself again.

MY mother always said that Mrs Carlyle told this tale very simply. Apparently she had never previously been overtaken by a complete lapse of memory, such as this, but then she had never before been accused of being a thief. A temporary loss of memory at such a juncture is intelligible enough. What seems to me of special interest about its occurrence in this case is that, though the memory disappeared from its usual haunts, a remnant of it was left in the feet and was able to discharge its office there. Did Mrs Carlyle, I wonder, get hold of the kind of memory that homing-pigeons habitually have and that sometimes makes it possible for a dog or cat, taken in a closed basket to some far-distant spot, to find its way home again through unfamiliar country? And if so, how did she come by it? How does such a memory act?

I would say that a person capable of thus forgetting everything about herself, and yet remaining herself nevertheless, must have a curious sort of nervous system. Mrs Carlyle was unquestionably a woman who required careful handling, and her husband resembled her in that respect. What they both needed, I fancy, was lots of rooms to turn in, and the way they lived in Cheyne Row did not give them enough of that. No wonder that they lost their tempers now and then. When Mrs Carlyle, as the legend has it, threw a teacup at her husband and the tea ran down his suit, I don't suppose she *meant* to do it; she just did it. It was certainly a slightly excessive demonstration on her part, but it does not remove from my mind the conviction that she loved him and thought there was no man in the world like him, and that he loved his Jeannie very dearly.



## Timepiece to Singapore

### 'TIGA BĚLAS'

OFFICERS in uniform do not carry parcels.

The custom of the service prohibits it. Still less do they carry large Buhl clocks. None the less I boarded a troopship at Southampton with one under my arm, and only a certain ingenuity on my part prevented my disembarkation at Singapore carrying it once again.

Minor breaches in the customs of the service are always of my wife's making. She is an admirable packer, up to a point, but a lively faith leads her to rely entirely on some last moment miracle to deal with hitches in planning—when, for instance, the amount to be packed grossly overexceeds her estimate and the containers available. When this miracle does not come off, and when she has exhausted her own emergency provision—three large linen laundry-bags, into which odd items are stuffed at the bitter end—the residue remains to be dealt with by other means, and long experience has taught me that this is merely another name for myself.

There was a fragile carton overfilled with small china ornaments when we left Germany; a netbag made by cripples and holding, of all things, glass when we left Northern Ireland; a package of liquid baby-foods when we were travelling by air somewhere else—and a

parrot for whom a home had to be found in a Continental zoo.

THIS time we were on a FARELF posting.

Aunt Frances's clock was going with us, together with a plate-chest, a toy electric-railway, a typewriter, and my sword, of which the case had unaccountably disappeared; and this cairn of unpackables was brought to my notice by my wife precisely as the Army lorry arrived for our baggage. My wife reminded me in a pungent whisper of just what repairs to the clock had cost last time it had travelled packed, and in the end our procession up the gangway was one child, carrying a sword; my wife, with the typewriter, still asserting that it could not and should not be trusted to other hands than hers; and myself with the clock. The railway, amid protests from our child, who ranked it above all other earthly treasures, had been hurriedly consigned to a laundry-bag and entrusted to the bombardier on the lorry, as had also the plate-chest.

I draw a curtain over the first three days of the voyage, during which the weather was unseasonably rough, and the clock, from some minor derangement, chimed unceasingly. My wife, when well enough to speak, claimed this

## TIMEPIECE TO SINGAPORE

to be mishandling on my part, and I was disproportionately grateful when a steward materialised who was a watchmaker's son, and who, in the intervals of telling us at length how he had chosen to go to sea rather than to spend his life bent over small mechanisms, set the chime to rights.

Why did we take the clock with us at all? Perhaps because the constant moves of service life breed an attachment to things which remind one of home. Aunt Frances's clock had for over twenty years held pride of place on the mantelpiece of a vicarage in Kent. Tucked behind it were always a collection of old envelopes that Uncle Willy saved with the utmost care, for the jotting of notes, or for turning inside out and reuse, since why waste good paper? Above it hung an enlarged photograph of Windsor Castle by moonlight, with a brass tablet on the frame recording the picture to be the gift of the choir in an earlier parish 'in grateful remembrance of the annual outing.' And on each side a Dresden vase set off the sombre richness of the clock's decoration.

The clock recorded the well-filled hours of parochial life—the meetings of the Mothers' Union and the G.F.S., the enjoyable preparations for the annual jumble-sale; but best the morning sessions where Uncle and Aunt sat together in the bay-window reciting the Psalms for the day, for Aunt Frances's failing sight made even the largest print a mockery, but a lifetime's acquaintance with the measured phrases of the Psalmist had made her word-perfect, and, since Uncle had no need of a book, any visitor chancing through the door, pegged open, would hear the two aged voices lifted in phrase and counter-phrase.

Uncle sat facing the clock at his large mahogany table, surrounded, as he always was, by what Aunt Frances rightly called 'litter'—trays from his collection of bygones, waiting their record-tags, anything from hop-tokens to coin-scales; kitchen-trays on which the garden lavender or the honesty pods were laid to dry; and, held down by chunks of lava from Vesuvius or by Roman marble, his voluminous correspondence, for Uncle was generally engaged in some paper battle with a fellow-cleric on a point of ritual or discipline, a battle in which each side sought with more or less success to combine brotherly charity with imputation against the opponent's judgment, wisdom, and scholarship; his feud with the Rural Dean on the theme of harvest

festivals and their origin went so far as to have a bound volume of letters, to which reference could be made on the finer points at issue. The bent figure, thickset, white-haired, in his hand the quill-pen he always cut for himself, would cast an occasional anxious glance to the clock, weighing the amount of time required to pen a new and biting refutation of the Dean's last contention, against the requirements of the confirmation class or the catechism, and when the chime reminded him that there was no further margin, he would shuffle the newly-written drafts under a paperweight and be off, heedless of Aunt's cry from her armchair that scarf and galoshes lay ready in the hall.

The clock came to us, as, alas, such things do, when Aunt Frances, and then Uncle Willy, went to the plots in the churchyard they had marked out long previously as their own. The furnishings of another incumbent fill the rectory now, and, old friend though he be, we are visitors where once we were at home.

WE lodged ourselves, clock, sword, and railway, in a Chinese-owned hotel, where the Cantonese manager had one life's ambition—to look like the oriental counterpart of a certain well-known male film-star, and the efficient running of the hotel, by any European standard, went to the wall because Mr Wu spent his entire time being measured for tussore jackets, lavender linen trousers, trimming the moustache that he had, with much difficulty, cultivated to a narrow hair-line on his upper-lip, and practising a sway-hipped walk, which in no wise resembled his chosen model. The crude occidental officers who with their families filled the hotel had a pungent and brief name for him which would have thrown him into a frenzy of falsetto squeals of denial had he heard and understood it. Excellent food was provided, at any hour of the day or night, but never by any chance at the time asked for; meals might, or they might not, be ready at a certain hour; and Mr Wu, called from his beauty culture to listen to complaints, would proffer apologies and nothing else. Any complaint which did go as far as the kitchen was met by Cookie on the Biblical principle of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; those who complained of unpunctuality were punished by meals served, for a brief uncertain period, on the tick—raw,

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parboiled, or burnt—until Cookie's own sense of outrage had diminished and he considered the hurried westerners had learned their lesson.

Aunt Frances's clock, keeping perfect time in the bedroom, pointed us reproachfully to a past of ideal punctuality. It was my wife who one day endeavoured to break the timeless spell by an approach to Number One. He was old, and by Chinese standards venerable; no one knew his exact age, but he had been known to the Singapore hotels for half-a-century, and was still saving for his old age, which he planned to spend in his native village, whence he had come as a youth, agog to see the further world. His knowledge of English was rather more than adequate, though seldom revealed; his instinct for placing westerners in the right grade of their barbarous hierarchy, unerring. Those who merited it got his personal and deft attention; those who forgot the elementary courtesies found themselves landed with Number Six, who had pimples and was afflicted with constitutional laziness.

It was part of Number One's responsibilities to wind the hotel's public clocks. The clocks were all at different times, less it seemed from any defect than from a dislike of uniformity; the dining-room one ran twenty minutes fast, the hall one thirty minutes slow, while the upstairs landing one followed a course entirely its own, depending on whether a sumatra blew up or not during the day. On one occasion when Number One was engaged in his winding, my wife, greatly daring, asked him whether he ever looked at the clocks. In the customary manner, several houseboys assembled at once to hear both question and answer. Honours went to Number One, not so much for what he said, since that consisted entirely of a brief phrase affirming that he could, indeed, 'read a clock,' but for the artistry with which by expression alone he managed to convey not only distaste but wholesale condemnation of such European circus tricks.

It was Number Three who spoke out of turn—for which Number One gave him a cutting flick with a starched tablenapkin—and told us his superior preferred to tell the time by a time stick. A 'time stick'? We inquired further. Number One, after a few catlike hisses at Number Three, which sent him scurrying to his corner, condescended to take us to the kitchen regions, and after some talk with the cook, who regarded our presence as

an unwarrantable intrusion, and had to be given several seconds to compose himself for the greeting courtesy required for strangers, we were shown a coiled spiral taper made of some slow-burning composition and informed that this was a time stick. The Greek chorus of houseboys which had crowded in after us here attempted to confuse matters by pointing to the sky and to the sun to assure us of the stick's accurate recording. Cookie, meanwhile, was dishing up a monster pannikin of rice and had lost interest in us altogether, but my wife, unwisely, chose to ask whether he timed his cookery by the stick. Cries of rebuttal told her just how wrong she was. 'No, no, no,' cackled Number Two shrilly. 'No, no,' agreed Number Four, 'Cookie not wants time knowing,' and, as confirmation of what experience had already shown to be a self-evident fact, we were urged across the kitchen to a shelf on which stood a fondant-pink American alarm-clock, going well, and turned face to the wall. After that, it seemed better to leave well alone, to make no further attempt to bridge the gulf yawning between the eastern and the western conception of time and its value, and my wife made no further conversational approaches on this theme.

IT was when we were posted up-country that Aunt Frances's clock really showed its powers. We were a long way from the lights of Singapore and its 800,000 Chinese, a long way, as my wife wistfully remarked, from anywhere at all, and our domestic staff held to the ways which had been good enough for their ancestors many generations back. It was not long before a houseboy, new to the ways of westerners, concluded that the clock was our household god. It held a prominent position on the best table in the room; it was consulted, with an expression of respect, several times a day; what else could it be but Tuan's little household deity?

The boy took to making propitiatory offerings of his own to the clock. We would find a fresh leaf laid before it, with some choice morsel. Bu'Lok, for such he understood to be the god's name, was being implored for some temporal favour. That in itself was bad enough; endeavours to explain led only to his deciding that religious jealousy made us wish to confine the deity's favours to ourselves; but worse, much worse, was to follow.



## TIMEPIECE TO SINGAPORE

There came a day when, returning home unexpectedly, we found a woman crouched head to the ground, hands flattened in supplication. Painful explanations ensued. It was two days before we got the full story—first, that the woman was imploring, from a powerful god, change of heart in a husband whose glance had strayed elsewhere; and next, that the boy had constituted himself guardian of the shrine, and had charged to her, and to others unknown, a small fee for approaching the holy ground.

He went—but Bu'Lok's reputation did not vanish as quickly as he did. Even when the clock was removed to another room, and its chime stopped as a precaution, we yet found offerings on the verandah outside, and not one, but several, of the devout sex at their prayers. It was perhaps as well that a change of posting came through before we were faced with a fully-developed cult and its self-appointed ministers. Bu'Lok, in a neat lidded and padded basket made by convicts in the jail fifty miles south, journeyed to a locality where no fame had preceded it, and where it returned to the simple duty of timekeeping—or so we thought, until, on two successive days, we found boiled sweets on a green leaf before it. It was impossible to suspect the mission boys we then had of such aberrations, and only after some domestic police-work by my wife did we find that our five-year-old had adopted in full the theories held by the dismissed houseboy, and, convinced the clock could operate a kind of white magic on its own, was making suitable sacrifices for the ends he desired.

It was then that we decided that Aunt Frances's clock had better do duty as my office timekeeper until the memory of idolatry

had faded out of my household. On my desk, in a padlocked and bolted office, it was safe from night theft, and away from any audience. There, for the time being, it remains.

MY new head clerk is a highly-educated Chinese. Straits-born, he regards the simple antics of recent immigrants from China with disdain, and is somewhat ostentatiously proud of not speaking Chinese, and of having forgotten even the echo of the dialect his father brought with him from a northern province as an immigrant thirty-eight years back. He has visited Europe, knows London, and has remarked to me that the clock is an interesting western timepiece. He has even told me of a place in Zurich where I could get it repaired far more efficiently than I ever could 'by ignorant people out here, sir.' Such is progress. I wonder sometimes what Aunt Frances would have made of the clock's travels and reputation. Herself austere and unimaginative, as a girl, and the last of her family, she gave the family diamonds to ornament the chalice of a West Indian church, and someone who was once unwise enough to ask her whether on the merely human side she did not regret such heirlooms, got an answer which showed just where, on the scale of mental weakness, Aunt Frances placed sentimentality. It was years later that she learned that the church kept the chalice in the local bank, only bringing it out for Christmas and Easter, for fear of robbery, and she was correspondingly annoyed that no more frequent use was made of her gift. I feel that clock worship would have been little to her taste—and perhaps the education which despises its own origins even less so.

## The Mind of Man

*The mind of man is like a lake,  
The wrath of man is like a breeze  
That ruffles the still pool to make  
A mock of all he sees.*

*Lilies that float and swans that steer  
Are lovely things, but who can know  
How this may be when on the mere  
The sudden tempests blow?*

*No lily then shall he discern  
Upon the pool but blurred in mist,  
And every wave that leaps shall turn  
The proud swan's parodist.*

*And not till calm from brim to brim  
Hold once again the mind of man  
Shall beauty clear come back to him  
In lily or in swan.*

WILFRID THORLEY.

## Twice-Told Tales

### XXXIX.—Pothouse Warbler

[From *Chambers's Journal* of March 1854.]

I DARTED at once into the 'Thingumbob.' In the course of half an hour, the room was unpleasantly full. Every man drank beer or grog, and smoked, and all talked, save those who roared, together. The odour of the strong rank weed they chose to smoke was almost enough to choke a crocodile—the walls of the room vanished behind the reeking mist that arose on all sides, and the vision of ill-favoured faces that loomed through the gray cloud reminded me of the grim colossal phantasmagoria which used to haunt my boarding-school couch on a hungry and sleepless night.

There were as yet no signs of business. The celebrated character had not made his appearance, or he had delayed his introduction, perhaps, to give the accommodating landlord of the 'Thingumbob' the benefit of those interesting moments which precede any important event, during which the absorbents are generally in a state of activity. Pending his arrival, some of the party got up an exhibition which I had not expected. Several members of the fraternity had brought little square bundles wrapped up in handkerchiefs; these proved to be small bird-cages, each containing a pet bird. One man, opening his cage, put in his forefinger, upon which he brought out a lively goldfinch, which he offered 'to whistle agin any bird in the room for a crown.' It seemed that the little songster was a celebrated prima donna in its way, and had earned the name which it bore, of the Jenny Lind. 'Don't you wish you may get it?' was the jeering inquiry from several voices. 'Give the long odds, and I'll match Piper agin him,' bawled one; but the proposition was not accepted. The little bird plumed itself proudly and uttered a note of defiance.

'Cock-a-doodle-doo!' screamed its proprietor—'all afeared on yer, Jenny, that's

what it is, my beauty—champion of all England, my little pinch o' feathers. Who bids ten guineas for the champion?'

'Not champion yet, if I know it,' said a voice from the abyss of sickening vapour; and a man stepped out of the gloom, bearing a bird perched on his knuckle, as closely resembling the redoubtable champion as it is possible to imagine. He accepted the challenge on behalf of his protégé, and producing his money, seated himself in a chair, rested his elbow on the table, and held forth his forefinger as a perch for the bird: the other did the same, while a third person lighted an inch of candle, and stuck it on an upturned pewter-pot between the competitors. The lists thus prepared, the challenger gave the signal by a peculiar sound produced by drawing the air between his lips; and Jenny, after a few low and preparatory flourishes, burst into song. The rival bird responded in a strain equally loud, and both sang in evident emulation of each other, and by degrees stilled all other sounds in the room, save the snorting puffs that rose from some half-hundred pipes. The little creatures grew wondrously excited; their throats swelled, their tiny feathers ruffled up, their eyeballs rolled, their beaks yawned and quivered, while without an instant's pause or let, amidst that horrid reek of filthy tobacco, through which their forms were just visible, still rushed the stream of song. One would have thought such an atmosphere would have poisoned them, but both were plainly proof against it; and when at length the rival bird ceased and fluttered down upon the table, it was from sheer exhaustion of physical strength. Jenny, as usual, had won the day; and its owner, as he complimented the bird caressingly, averred, with a tremendous expletive, that he would have wrung its neck upon the spot had it been defeated.



## Mud in Your Eye

YVONNE McBAIN

MRS HANCOCK picked up the teapot and poured herself a second cup of gin. She preferred drinking it out of a cup; there was a friendly, comfortable feeling about a cup, whereas a tumbler felt quite out of place in her big, red hand. Besides, it would have seemed foreign and reactionary to have poured the contents of a teapot into anything other than a cup, and, as there was nothing that more offended her sense of propriety than the sight of a gin-bottle, the gin had to go into the teapot.

She smiled wickedly to herself and wondered if any of her neighbours ever guessed the secret of that homely, brown teapot. She felt sure they didn't. She was even tempted to clean the window so that they would be able to see her sipping from her cup and think that she was soberly drinking tea. But if she did, they would be able to see other things that she was not so anxious to show them—for Mrs Hancock, who cleaned other people's houses all day long, enjoyed the luxury of keeping her own home dirty.

As always, when she was on her second cup of gin, she started wondering when Mr Hancock would be back. It wouldn't be long now, she thought. It was almost four years since he had picked up his cap and left, and four

years away from home was enough to teach any man.

She didn't miss him very much. Men, she thought, were largely a matter of habit. You could get used to living without one just as easily as you got used to living with one. The evenings, however, had fallen a bit flat since he left.

It was just about this time that he used to come home. She remembered how she used to sit waiting for him, full of pleasurable anticipation, everything in the room neat and spruce and shining. Eventually she would hear his key grate in the lock. There would be the sound of shuffling in the hall as he took his coat and cap off. Then he would open the door and lumber over to his chair by the fire, leaving a little trail of dust on the carpet. 'Albert!' she would cry, her voice trembling with glorious, righteous indignation. 'How many times have I told you to take your boots off before you come into the room?'

He would hide behind his newspaper and pretend he hadn't heard. But she knew how to deal with him. Along to the cupboard for her brush and dust-pan, down on her knees, and brush, brush, brush, slowly and deliberately. Soon the newspaper would start to twitch nervously. Then the ash from his

## Twice-Told Tales

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cigarette would, as likely as not, topple off on to the clean, shiny surface of the hearth.

'Look where you're dropping that cigarette-ash, Albert! When I think of the hours I spend trying to make the place look respectable, and the few minutes it takes you to make it look like a pigsty. . . .'

She chuckled gleefully at the memory of those evening games.

**B**UT, if Hancock's departure had deprived Mrs Hancock of those pleasures, it had also brought her new ones. At first she had rebelled against the idea of charring: doing housework for its own sake she found dull and pointless. After all, as things always got dirty again eventually, it was so much simpler to leave them dirty to begin with. More odious still was the thought of working for, and being bossed about by, another woman. However, if she was to earn her bread and butter—and more important, her gin, she would have to work, and, as charring was the only work she was capable of doing, charring it had to be. And to her surprise she found that it was just as easy to be tyrannical in someone else's house as it was in her own.

She chose her employers carefully. Those who kept dogs were the ones she preferred. A dog could make such a difference to cleaning a step, for instance. This was a work she loathed, particularly on a winter's day, when her fingers froze, her back ached, and her rheumatism made itself felt in her joints. But if, out of the corner of her eye, she could see a dog digging in the garden, she would forget all her discomforts and her whole soul would go into her scrubbing-brush. She would scrub and scrub until the step was like driven snow—and until the dog tired of its digging and scampered indoors. Then with what jubilation she would raise her voice in protest. 'Look at that dog, ma'am! Just look what it's done! Here have I been cleaning this step for the last half-hour, and I might just as well have saved my time . . . Thanking you, ma'am, but I'm not going to leave it in this condition. No, I'll get down and clean it again. Nobody's going to say that I leave my work unfinished.'

Houses where there were young children had great possibilities too. She would polish floors until they shone like mirrors, for the occasional excruciating pleasure of catching a line of little rubber footprints in them.

She knew that all her employers were frightened of her. In better days, when domestic help was easier to get, they would probably not have tolerated her; but, as things were, they were only too pleased to keep her, for, even if she was truculent, no one could deny that she was hardworking.

'Hardworking and conscientious.' That was how she was invariably described in testimonials given by her employers. Pensively she traced the words out with her forefinger in the dust on the top of the table. The newspapers were right, of course; it was all a question of incentives. She wrote that word out in the dust too. Given the right incentive, anybody anywhere would be hardworking and conscientious; and if you took it away from him he would in all likelihood become a drone. If she was a slattern in her own house, then the fault lay with Hancock for leaving it and taking her only incentive with him.

There had been others once, relations mainly. She remembered with particular affection her sister, who had a satisfyingly irritating habit of putting cigarette-ash in her saucer, and old Uncle Joe, whose hand trembled so much that he always spilt things on the tablecloth. But for some reason they had stopped coming.

**M**RS HANCOCK suddenly felt lonely. It was quite normal, she knew—something that always happened between the second and third cups; but that somehow didn't make it any easier to bear at the time. The room was so still and quiet. She would have given a lot to have had old Hancock sitting snoring by the fire. She would even have let him go on snoring, instead of poking him in the ribs and saying: 'I have enough to put up with all day, without listening to you snore all evening.'

She remembered the words she had heard her next-door neighbour shouting over the fence a few days after Hancock had left. She never had liked the woman. 'Have you heard that Albert 'Ancock's left home? Well, she brought it on herself, if you ask me. Never stopped nattering at him all evening. I used to hear her—nag, nag, nag all the time.'

It had taken her a long time to digest that. The fact that the words bore an element of truth did not make them any easier to swallow. Of course, she had nattered at him a bit, just for fun; but then every woman since Eve had nattered at her man. And Hancock, with his

## SMOCKS WERE THEIR PRIDE

slovenly ways, deserved it no less than the others. No, of course it wasn't that that had driven him away. It was just his age. Fifty was a bad time for a man: it unsettled him and made him want to go roving.

Nevertheless, she resolved that when he came back she would be careful not to overdo the evening games. She would limit herself, like she did with the gin at the end of the month, so that it would be a special treat and not a regular habit. 'Just enough to give me a bit of inshentive,' she promised, as she picked up the teapot.

SHE was half way through her third cup when she heard a key grate in the lock. There was a shuffling noise in the hall, the door opened, and Albert Hancock ambled over to his chair by the fire. He sat looking thoughtful for a few minutes and then took a newspaper out of his pocket.

'So you've come home?' said Mrs Hancock. 'Aye.'

He hadn't changed a bit. His chin was a bit grizzled and he still needed a haircut; his suit was shabby, and his boots . . . She turned her head away. She tried not to look at them; but everywhere she cast her eyes she found a little red, dancing devil, who tried to entice her gaze back to them. Finally the devil triumphed: it was too much to bear. She got up, and her legs led her to the cupboard. Her hands opened the door and dragged out the dusty vacuum-cleaner.

Albert Hancock watched her as she pushed the cleaner over the carpet. Each stroke of it revealed colours and patterns that had been hidden by years of dust. His mouth curled down at one corner—the nearest he ever got to a smile. 'It were dirty, weren't it?' he said.

Mrs Hancock glowered. 'And what do you expect,' she snarled, 'when you bring so much mud in on your boots?'

## Smocks Were Their Pride

LAURENCE WILD

ONE of the most interesting and unusual sights at our annual village flower-show and fête is a beautifully embroidered old-fashion smock-frock worn by one of the village worthies as traditional old-time country costume. The garment belonged to the present owner's grandfather, who, we are told, could remember the days when smock-frocks were everyday garments, and countrymen were proud to wear them.

The smock worn by countrymen until about the end of the last century, and truly referred to as 'one of the most sensible garments ever devised by the wit of man,' can claim Anglo-Saxon descent. In those early days it took the form of a knee-length and smock-like belted tunic, made of home-

spun linen for summer wear, and of woollen material for winter.

This Saxon tunic was worn by all classes. It was often ornamented around the neck and the hem with coloured borders and, like the countryman's smock-frock, it had long sleeves, and an open neck to allow it readily to be slipped on over the head. The tunic as worn by the king and nobles was a longer, wider in the skirt, and more richly decorated garment than that worn by ordinary men.

No doubt the tunic was as simple in structure as the countryman's smock-frock, which was made, without any initial shaping, from two full widths of stout, heavy, almost waterproof linen seamed together up the sides. Deep armholes accommodated the

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wide, low-set sleeves, which were slightly gathered at the insertion, and more closely gathered in at the wrist. A wide, shaped neck-opening, fitted with a big turn-down, and sometimes sailor-like, collar, enabled the loose-fitting garment easily to be slipped on over the head. Many of these old smocks had two large and roomy pockets, one on each side. Sometimes they had embroidered pocket-flaps, which were known as 'pocket lids.'

It was said of these old embroidered smocks that they were wonderfully warm across the chest and would keep out the wind and rain as effectively as a topcoat. Indeed, many a downland shepherd was content to face up to a wet day protected only by his big shepherd's umbrella, and a smock-frock over his corduroys. The smock's ample and undivided lap was often used as a carrier for fruit, and for greens and potatoes dug from the cottage garden. Thomas Hardy, in one of his novels, suggests yet another use for the smock-frock when one of the characters is told to 'wisk the tail of thy smock-frock around the inside of those quart-pots afore you draw in 'em—they be an inch thick in dust!'

**T**HERE were decided differences in the smock-frocks as worn in different districts. Often the shepherd's smock was fairly long and reached below the knee. The carter's smock came only to the thighs so that his legs could have complete freedom of movement as he strode along beside his wagon. Many men had two smocks, a comparatively plain one for work, and another decorated with intricate and beautiful smocking for Sundays and ceremonial occasions.

The working smocks often varied in colour. Olive-green smocks were favoured in Surrey and in some of the Eastern Counties. In the Midlands, a blue smock, sometimes called a Newark-frock, was worn. Blue was one of the colours worn in Sussex, probably one of the last counties to give up wearing the smock-frock. Black, drab, and grey smocks were also worn in Sussex and other southern counties.

In most districts the Sunday or ceremonial

smock-frock was made from white homespun linen. It was worn with corduroy breeches, gaiters, and a tall-hat, for church. In many places, particularly Sussex, it was customary for the coffin-bearers at village funerals to wear clean white smocks, white gloves, and tall-hats.

Some of the ceremonial white smocks, which often lasted a lifetime, and were even regarded as family heirlooms, were frequently made as a wedding-present by the wearer's sweetheart. She spent months carefully needleworking, in white linen thread, panels of beautiful honeycomb smocking on the chest and back. More intricate embroidery, with much diversity of design, was needleworked alongside these panels, and on the shoulders, wrist-bands, and collar. It differed from the panels of traditional smocking in as much as it was often made up of leaf and floral designs, intertwined stems and tendrils, and ornamental forms of hearts, diamonds, and zig-zags. Some of these designs are said to have been regarded as the property of particular families in various parts of the country, and as such they were handed down from one generation to another.

Into this additional embroidery was sometimes worked an indication of the wearer's calling. In the embroidery of the carter's smock, for instance, one might discern representations of reins, cartwheels, and whip. The shepherd was known by needleworked crooks, the gardener by the leafy designs and floral effects, and the woodsman by little embroidered trees. Usually the panels of smocking, and the general design of the other embroidery, were the same back and front so that the smock could be worn either way about.

In some places the old men clung stubbornly to their smock-frocks long after they had gone out of fashion and the cheap ready-made suit had found its way into almost every cottage home and country district. But with the passing of these old-timers their smock-frocks were folded up and put away, until finally the day came when this sartorial link with the days of ancient rural England became a garment of the past to be worn only very occasionally, and as a curiosity at some special country event.



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## Science at Your Service

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### A SIXTH TRACE ELEMENT?

AS gardeners and farmers will be aware, certain elements are essential to plant-growth, though only in exceedingly minute amounts. So far, five have been proved indispensable—manganese, boron, copper, zinc, and molybdenum. These are in addition, of course, to the so-called major elements, as nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, etc., which are needed in much larger amounts. At the end of 1953 a new claim was presented for vanadium. Research at the University of California, one of the most famous centres of trace-element investigation, showed that traces of vanadium were essential for the growth of a species of green algae, *Scenedesmus obliquus*. Vanadium is fairly widely distributed in the earth's surface crust; though not one of the best-known elements, it is actually more abundant in the earth than copper or zinc. Some years ago French research had shown that vanadium was present in every one of a large number of plant species analysed; still, plants can assimilate elements from soils even though they may not be essential to growth.

The new U.S. research arose from work on the iron requirements of this particular alga species. Such exceptional increases in growth were shown when the amount of iron salts in the nutrient solution was increased that it was suspected that an impurity in the source of iron was exercising a trace nutrient effect. However, all the known trace elements were already adequately provided in the solution. The three most likely other elements as impurities were cobalt, nickel, and vanadium. Tests were then carried out with a much purer form of iron salt, with supplies of these elements added; it was found that the pronounced growth-effect took place only when vanadium salts were added in traces.

Before the place of vanadium as an essential trace element can be admitted there must be further work showing it to be essential in the nutrition of other green plants. At present, possibility rather than actuality has been established.

### A RETAINER FOR WINDOWS AND DOORS

Friction devices for casement-windows, doors, and even heavy garage-doors are likely to prove useful in many circumstances. The fittings are claimed to hold windows tight even in a 40 mile-per-hour gale. The principle is simple enough. Two arms which can be screwed one to the window and the other to the holding frame are wing-bolt connected, thus allowing opening, according to the angle of connection, and firm setting of the position by tightening the wing-bolt. There are three models, two for lighter duties with 3-inch and 5-inch arms respectively, and one model for heavier duty, such as garage-door holding. They can all be fitted in top or bottom positions and for either left-hand or right-hand opening.

### FUEL FROM MAGNESIUM

Although new oil-fields are being discovered in various parts of the world—notably, since the War, in Canada and Australia—it seems unlikely that the world's total supply can perpetually equate the demand presented. The requirements of cars and planes alone are increasing every year. What happens in the next century? There seems no cause for foreboding, for in all probability liquid fuels will eventually be displaced by metallic fuels. At the present time a powdered magnesium fuel is being developed as an aircraft fuel. 350 pounds of this fuel can provide the power equivalent of 3000 gallons, or 18,000 pounds, of petrol. The powder has to be milled to an exceptional fineness and it must be made from high-purity metal ingots. A specially-designed engine has, of course, had to be constructed. Air is used as the oxidant. The project must be regarded as highly experimental for the time being, but it may easily be the advance token of a major revolution in fuel technology. As one of the recognised processes for producing magnesium is based upon the extraction of the mineral from sea-water, magnesium as a fuel can reasonably be described as inexhaustible.

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### AN EXTENDING BRUSH

The idea of an extending brush is hardly new, but a recently-introduced household appliance of this type seems well designed and constructed. The handle is telescopic in nature, with a steel outer tube and an inner tube of flexible alloy; the extension is from 3½ to 6½ feet, giving the average user a reach of about 13 feet. The extended position can be locked to any chosen length, the locking device being made in moulded cream plastics. The brush itself has a wire foundation filled with soft hair; and the brush head is detachable and so can be replaced when worn. The appearance of the appliance as a whole is attractive. The outer tube is finished in cream enamel; the inner alloy tube is finished in blue, green, or red; the handle is cushioned with white rubber. The price of the brush is reasonable.

### CUPBOARD INTO AIRING CUPBOARD

A new electrical appliance is claimed to convert any cupboard into an airing cupboard without risk of fire or shock. It is a 100-watt warming-panel, held in a wire frame, and able to stand either vertically or horizontally on the cupboard or wardrobe floor. The elements carry a five-years' guarantee. The appliance is supplied with a 6-foot length of flex, and can therefore be plugged in for use in various cupboards if points are suitably adjacent.

### EASIER TILING

That there has been remarkable progress in adhesives in recent years is probably well known to every amateur decorator. The hanging-hooks and other household fittings that can be stuck on to wall surfaces simply by moistening their adhesive-coated backs may be cited as an outstanding example, for ten years ago such products would have been deemed impossible. A British tile-making company has now developed a special adhesive for ordinary glazed tiles, the type normally used for bathrooms or kitchens. The adhesive is suitable for almost any existing wall-finish—timber, cement, plaster-board, glazed-brick, glazed-tile, etc. With this material the old necessity to hack off and render walls in preparation for tiling is eliminated. The adhesive, supplied in tins, is simply spread on the wall, combed to leave ribs ¼-inch deep, and, when the surface is in a tacky condition, tiles can be fixed in position.

Tiling can therefore be accomplished with much less upheaval and mess. An explanatory booklet is available. It seems likely that any competent amateur home-decorator could undertake his own tiling, at any rate, on straightforward wall areas.

### PLASTIC PAINTS

One of the oldest-established British paint companies has produced a new range of plastic emulsion paints for flat-finish interior walls. These paints can be applied in the same way as distemper, either by brush or roller. The freshly-applied surface dries in less than an hour with a matt surface, which can be washed or scrubbed with soap and water or detergents to remove subsequent soiling. No special undercoat is needed, for the same paint serves both purposes, or alternatively a single application may give the required finish. The initial range of colours is composed of delicate rather than pronounced pastel shades—ivory, cream, deep cream, oyster, pale lemon, ice blue, jubilee blue, a faintly-pink cream, a deeper pink, a pale grey, and a light and a brilliant green; also a white for ceilings. The paints are sold in pint, quart, ½-gallon, or gallon tins. They can be thinned down with water. No special skill is needed for their use; indeed, less demand appears to be made upon experience in decorating than by many standard materials for wall colouring.

### BETTER STRAWBERRIES

At the famous horticultural research centre, Long Ashton, Somerset, a two-season study of the effects of manure and fertiliser treatment upon the quality of the strawberry has recently been reported. The same variety of strawberry was grown upon a number of different plots which had received different treatments for over twenty consecutive years. Quality of fruit was judged by tasting-panel tests and by determinations of such major factors as sugars, acids, vitamin C, and pectin. One most outstanding conclusion was reached—that the most influential nutrient for this crop is potash. Yields and quality were the highest on all plots where liberal potash supply was part of the treatment. Fertiliser treatments that excluded potash, however generously other plant-foods were provided, led to inferior fruit and yields. This perhaps does little more than confirm the experiences of many growers, but it is a solid and detailed confirmation.

## SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

### A NOVEL GARDENING TOOL

An appliance of the plunger type, claimed to fulfil a wide range of gardening operations, is comprised of a metal cylinder of 3 inches diameter, with a handle at the top and a sprung central spindle with diaphragm. The circular edge at the bottom of the cylinder is internally ground in order to give sharp penetration and compression of soil. The depth of penetration required can be pre-set by a wire gauge slider; settings from 1 inch to 6 inches in half-inch gradations can be made. The tool can therefore make round holes of these varied depths, and after the actual soil operation has been done—bulb-planting, weeding, transplanting, or even soil-block making—the soil held in the cylinder is discharged by striking the knob at the top end of the sprung spindle. Two models of the appliance are manufactured, the slightly more expensive one being plated.

### A NEW REFRIGERATOR

A particular feature of a new refrigerator deserves mention for its novelty. This is an automatic defrosting action, initiated by pushing a button. The defrosting is completed quickly enough for frozen foods in the refrigerator to be safely left there undisturbed. Also, a red indicator gives the signal when defrosting is required. The refrigerator reverts to normal operation when defrosting has been completed.

### A REVOLUTION IN TAPS

An entirely new form of water-tap, actually introduced a few years ago but not previously mentioned in these columns, has one outstanding advantage—washers can be changed speedily and without the necessity to turn off the main supply. A second feature is the inclusion within the tap of an anti-splash device. Finger-light operation is a third feature of these taps. The taps differ in appearance from others in that the actual turning part of the tap is at the water-outlet end; indeed, it is the spout that turns, the nozzle being fitted in one piece with a four-vane finger-grip. A full range of models for all domestic

purposes is now available. Hose adaptors are now also available as accessories. Various finishes can be obtained, including de luxe nozzles with the winged finger-grips in various coloured plastics—cream, primrose, black, and pastel shades of blue, pink, and green. These taps have been tested in use by the writer and it appears that all the claims made are fully justified.

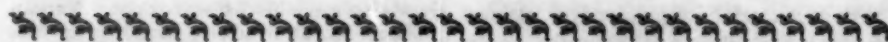
### TV AND CRIME DETECTION

In the general run, crimes are not committed in the presence of witnesses. Television, however, can become a major weapon on the side of the law, as is shown by a recent case in the United States. Appropriately enough, it concerns a television equipment store where persistent theft was taking place but could not be detected. A television lens was fixed in a concealed position in the roof and focusing upon the loading platform of the warehouse. Police officers occupied a room on an upper floor in the company of the other end of the closed circuit—with receiver and screen. The unusual activities of a clerk during the lunch-hour were soon televised. Twice a week he was seen to place packets of television tubes on the platform; in the afternoons a van from outside would arrive and pick up these packages. The quiet and regular routine of the operation having been witnessed in every detail by the police, the clerk and the driver of the van were duly arrested when the next repetition took place.

### A COAT-HANGER FOR SMALL SPACES

A sensibly designed coat-hanger and hat-rack for utilising small space to the maximum extent is being offered by a West Country manufacturer. It is composed of three wooden rods each 40 inches long; these are held in two metal brackets with a 10½ inch projection from the wall. The central rod carries two, and the inside and outside rod each carries three, double-sided hanging-hooks. These hooks are spaced in alternate positions in order to give maximum lateral space for hanging coats. The top of the rods forms a rack for hats.

TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.



## The Glory of the Delphinium

I HAVE always been interested in the delphinium as a flower because I think it is one of the most beautiful perennials we have. It is tall and imposing, and yet has a great gracefulness about it. It is no wonder that there is a Delphinium Society, and I am proud to have been made an honorary member.

If you are going to grow delphiniums, as I hope you will, then plant them in a place where they will be sheltered from strong prevailing winds. They will like to be in a nice sunny situation, so that they can be seen at their best, and they will demand plenty of light and air. You can have them in the normal herbaceous border, or even in the shrubbery. Because the delphinium has an extensive root-system, it is well worth while preparing the soil with care. I always bastard-trench, and thus cultivate to a depth of about 20 inches. This means getting down into the bottom of each trench and forking the earth over *in situ*. It never pays to bring this sub-soil to the top of the ground.

Before the forking is done, it is best to put in a good layer of well-rotted farm-yard manure or compost. The finest thing would be to use cow-dung or pig-dung in the case of the light soils, and horse-manure with the heavy clays. Most of us, however, to-day compost our own vegetable refuse, and fortunately this is ideal for either light or heavy soils. In addition to any compost or dung that is buried, it helps if you fork into the top two or three inches some sedge-peat at 1 to 2½ gallon bucketfuls to the square yard, and, in addition, a fish-fertiliser can be added at 4 ounces to the square yard.

Of course, dig the ground early, so as to allow the land to settle, and only do the forking a few days before the delphiniums are actually to be planted. On the light lands it is useful to give some sulphate of potash, as well as the fish-manure, and this can be applied at 2 ounces to the square yard. Finally, when raking the bed level, apply hydrated lime at 5 to 6 ounces to the square yard and allow it to work itself into the ground gradually. It will be quite all right

for you to prepare the ground now, and, in fact, I always think that in the North spring planting is preferable to autumn planting. If, granted you get suitable conditions, you plant during the first two weeks of March, you will find that beautiful spikes will be produced during the summer. Ask the nurserymen, however, to send you the delphiniums to arrive some time during March, and when the plants come see if there are three or four shoots growing at the head of each crown. If there are, then take a sharp knife and cut the plants received into three or four pieces, each one with a good bud or crown at the top.

These small plants settle themselves into their new position much more quickly than the big plants, and they produce sturdier flower-spikes also. Spread the roots out well when planting. Never allow them to be bunched or curled up. Do not plant deeply, but do plant firmly. Always start by buying good varieties, and do not mind paying a good price for them. Once you have got them, it's quite easy to propagate from them next spring by taking cuttings. These are severed when the plants are about 2 inches out of the ground, and, if you scrape the soil away carefully, you can see where the shoot joins the stem, and sever it there.

The cuttings can be pushed into sandy soil in a frame, and if you throw one or two sacks over the glass you will stop the sun drying things up too much. Keep the frames closed until the cuttings have rooted. Rooting should take place in two or three weeks. You cannot expect flowers the first year from cuttings, but you will get some good blooms the next season, and your best spikes in the third year. All delphiniums are gross feeders, so be prepared to give them some fish-fertiliser each season. I give mine a feed every March, and yet another one early in May.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

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